



THE INDEPENDENT

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INSIDE TODAY

New Year's Eve:
Where to be seen...
NEWS/3



... and what to be
seen in
FASHION/14

TODAY'S NEWS

Eddie George offers hope to business

Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, yesterday offered a ray of hope to businesses that have been hurt by this year's surge in the value of the pound, saying sterling's high value was not sustainable. But, in an interview with *The Independent*, he also warned the economy had to slow down but said there would not be another recession. Page 24

Tories query arrest

The shadow Home Secretary, Sir Brian Mawhinney, has written to the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner posing a series of questions about the arrest of *Mirror* reporter Dawn Alford who claimed she had bought drugs from a cabinet minister's son. Page 3

UVF leader buried

Murdered UVF leader Billy Wright was buried in his home town today after one of the biggest loyalist funerals in Northern Ireland for many years. Page 3

TODAY'S INDEPENDENT

This week there will be no Eye, nor the usual Plus sections. Television and radio are on the inside back of this section, the weather is on page 2, and the crosswords are on pages 30 and 32.

PROMOTION

Starting next week:
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TELEVISION Page 31
CROSSWORDS Pages 30,32
WEATHER Page 2

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Arise Sir Elton, the Queen's Knight



Elton Hector John is no more. Instead we must know the man whose most glorious moment was to sing *Candle in the Wind* at Princess Diana's funeral as Sir Elton, no less. Not even Sir Reginald, which is what he would have been if he'd kept his birth name.

The flamboyant rockstar, who was made a CBE only two years ago, expressed his "immeasurable joy"

yesterday, and said it showed an appreciation of all the hard work by everyone connected with the Elton John Aids foundation and other HIV/Aids organisations with which he was associated.

But the centrepiece of what was presented as the Prime Minister's "people's honours" list was awards for three heads for turning around failing inner-city schools or raising

educational standards. Many other awards went to teachers.

However, the award of a life peerage for the millionaire publisher Paul Hamlyn is likely to raise eyebrows around party funding, since he is said to have donated more than £600,000 to the Labour Party. Mr Hamlyn, however, is also a generous benefactor for charity and the arts, through his Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

That was '97, another year of rising heat

1997 will be England's third warmest year since temperature records began more than three centuries ago. Man-made global warming can already be seen in temperature trends for the entire globe. Now, says Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, climatologists are trying to establish whether it has begun in Britain.

Three of the five warmest years documented in the Meteorological Office's data on central England temperatures are post-1988. 1990 is the record-holder, with an average of 10.63C.

Yesterday, the Met Office said that with the final day of 1997 forecast to be mild, this year would end up in third place at 10.57C. After that comes 1989, then 1959.

Scientists at the Met Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction are also now certain that 1997 will prove to be the warmest year for the oceans and continents of the entire planet, based on global temperature records from ship and land-based weather stations going back more than 130 years.

"What we're seeing is a parallel between the global records and those for England," said Geoff Jenkins, head of climate prediction at the centre. He said it was six months into a study on whether the warming of Britain was also the result of a build-up of heat trapping pollutants in the atmosphere.

The central England temperature record goes back to 1659 and is the oldest in the world. It is an amalgamation of several long-running temperature measurements from

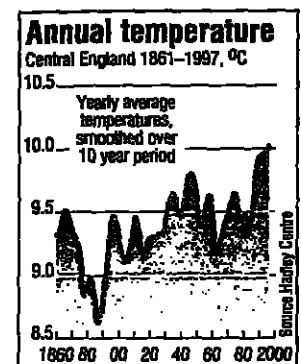
Hertfordshire, the Malvern Hills and locations near Manchester and Blackpool.

In its first two centuries, many of the records were kept by clergymen and landed gentry with an interest in science.

August, February and March had the most exceptional warmth over the past year. Despite the odd cold-snap, the autumn has been on the mild side and so has December.

The three months of last winter, which the Met Office counts as December, January and February, were actually slightly colder than usual: 0.2C below the long term average for this period.

As for rainfall, this past year has been drier than average in



England and Wales but not exceptionally so. With just one final day of data missing from 1997, the Met Office says 94 per cent of average rainfall will have descended. That puts 1997 nowhere near the top 10 driest years in a precipitation record going back over 250 years, and barely in the top 100.

Climate and weather have been the environmental bad news of 1997. Three weeks ago, in Kyoto, rich countries agreed they would cut their annual emissions of greenhouse gases by 5.2 per cent off their 1990 level. But that reduction will, it seems, be more than outweighed by increases from industrialised countries in the south such as India, China, Indonesia and Brazil.

Prescription charge plan for pill

Most women could face a £5.65 prescription charge on supplies of the Pill in the latest of Tony Blair's "tough choices" for the Welfare State. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says campaigners are warning Labour MPs it is a "tax on fertility".

Campaigners for free birth control will urge Labour MPs in the New Year to fight a proposal to impose prescription charges on contraceptives for most women.

Health ministers are considering ending the free prescription of contraceptives for better-off women as part of a

fundamental review of NHS charges. It is one of the "tough choices" which Tony Blair has said is facing the welfare state.

The Birth Control Trust is preparing a briefing note for MPs in the hope of forcing the Government to abandon the plan in the wake of the rebellion by more than 50 Labour MPs over cuts in one-parent benefits.

Some senior members of the British Medical Association support the introduction of charges for some women, because it believes it could help the Government reduce the overall cost of prescriptions. Charging for the Pill could save the NHS about £50m a year.

The *Independent* has learned that ministers have ruled out imposing new NHS charges for visiting the family doctor

and for "hotel" accommodation in hospitals, such as food and rooms, although Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, has encountered criticism for being unable to make

tions for prescription charges. The "passporting" of exemptions, allowing sufferers of one disease to qualify for free prescriptions for any other ailments are likely to end. Some well-off

EXCLUSIVE BY COLIN BROWN

a public announcement before the review is completed in the spring. "A Labour Government was never going to introduce such charges," said a ministerial source.

Ministers are pressing ahead, however, with attempts to cut the £4bn drugs bill with radical changes to the exemp-

elderly patients could also face charges for the first time.

Prescription charges could be imposed on contraceptives as part of a general move to end widespread exemptions from the charge - raised 15p by the Tories in November last year to £5.65 per item. The Government may soften the impact by

announcing a freeze or a cut in the charge from next April.

Britain has one of the highest rates in Europe for unwanted pregnancies among teenage girls. Imposing charges on the Pill would run counter to the one of successive governments' key "health of the nation" targets for reducing teenage pregnancies.

Teenagers and women on Income Support, therefore, are likely to continue to get their contraceptives prescribed free of charge, but most other women will have to pay, unless the Government abandons the idea.

A cross-party group of 47 MPs, led by Labour MPs Martin Jones and John Austin, have already laid down a Commons motion warning that a charge might discourage women from using contracep-

tion and urging the Government to reject the idea on principle.

Ann Furedi, director of Birth Control Trust, said: "A charge for the Pill would be a tax on fertility. We are opposed to the introduction of any charges for contraception. It is vital that nothing is done to make the use of contraception more difficult."

It is estimated that one in four sexually active women uses the Pill. The Pharmaceutical Contraceptive Group (PCG), which represents manufacturers of the Pill is also in favour of a charge for contraceptives. It said Britain was the only country in the world which provided the Pill free of charge. In the rest of Europe women pay up to £5 for a year's supply. In the US it costs an average of £130.

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3/LEADING STORIES

THE INDEPENDENT
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Tories press for answers over drugs arrest

The Tory home affairs spokesman yesterday raised questions about the arrest of a journalist after she exposed the alleged drug dealing of a Cabinet minister's son.

Michael Smeeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, says the affair has provided a new festive guessing game - who is the minister?

Sir Brian Mawhinney wrote to both Dame Barbara Mills, the Director of Public Prosecutions, and Sir Paul Condon, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, yesterday seeking reassurance that the case was being handled in the same way as any other. They, like him, he wrote "will want the public to know that there is no question that different rules are being applied in this case because a minister's son is involved".

He cited the claim that a police officer told the reporter, Dawn Alford, that the decision to arrest her - in connection with possession of the drug she was allegedly sold - had been taken out of his hands.

It emerged yesterday that the police arrested the reporter after asking the CPS for advice. But CPS sources dismissed suggestions that there had been political involvement in their advice as "nonsense". Police point out that the drug was not immediately handed over to them and they had no prior knowledge of the newspaper's plans.

Police confirmed yesterday that a second teenager has been arrested by police investigating the minister's son. The 17-year-old attended a London police station and was arrested in connection with alleged possession with intent to supply cannabis.

But the question remains - why have newspapers and broadcasters avoided publication of such tantalising information as the minister's name? The frantic Internet speculation and the rush for the latest edition of *Who's Who* to find out which ministers have teenage sons point up the intriguing question.

There seems on the face of it no real legal reason why the 17-year-old cannot be identified. The main law applying is section 49 of the 1933 Children and Young Persons Act, updated by a 1994 Act, which

forbids identification of juveniles concerned - as accused or victims - in court proceedings.

The crucial phrase is "proceedings". It seems hard to argue that proceedings have started in a case where the 17-year-old - who is said to have sold cannabis to the reporter - has been arrested, but not charged, and where no file has yet been sent to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Tom Welsh, editor of the periodical *Media Lawyer*, said: "In my view, there is no legal inhibition on naming this boy." He said he had never come across a case where a newspaper had been prosecuted for identifying a youth before court proceedings had begun. "I'm totally puzzled."

At best it would seem to be a "grey area" of law, something which has not usually inhibited newspapers in the past. Another obstacle may be the industry's code of conduct about naming of juveniles just because of a relationship with a prominent person - but there seems to be strong grounds for a public interest defence. The most likely reason for caution is a reluctance to antagonise ministers over an issue that could lead to tighter media controls.

If section 49 does already apply in this case, the maximum fine for breaching it is £5,000. Although there has been much talk about contempt of court, it is hard to see how the mere publication of someone's name can "seriously prejudice" their chance of a fair hearing in this kind of case. More serious perhaps is the publication of events surrounding the youth's alleged dealing in a pub in London before Christmas - which has already happened.

Again, if section 49 does apply, then the boy's parents in this case do not have the right to waive his anonymity, as rape victims can do. But the ban can be lifted by the court - in the interests of the juvenile. The Home Secretary also had the power, but it was removed by the 1994 Act.

A court now also has the new power to "name and shame" persistent youth offenders, under section 45 of the Crime (Sentences) Act which came into force on 1 October, a measure proposed by Michael Howard but enforced by Jack Straw.

According to experts, while a youth caught in possession of cannabis in Lon-

don would certainly get a caution and no more, the allegation of supplying - albeit with just £10 worth - means the matter could well go to court.

Scotland Yard have indicated they are preparing a file for the CPS. The CPS will consider first whether there is sufficient evidence to gain a conviction, then decide whether a prosecution is in the public interest; with juvenile cases they have to consider whether the harmful effect of a successful prosecution is disproportionate to the alleged offence.

Harry Fletcher, assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, says that where a youth is accused of supplying even small amounts of a drug, the case "almost certainly" proceeds to court.

A youth court can either deal with the matter immediately, perhaps imposing a small fine or a conditional discharge, or adjourn, normally for reports by a probation officer. This includes an interview with the youth - and his or her parents.

The court can then impose a community service order if it feels this is the best course.

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

He had climbed the greasy BBC pole and slipped. What to do? David Aaronovitch's resolution
FEATURES

Dilemmas: Virginia Ironside's response to the wife who hates her husband smoking
FEATURES



From Bonnard at the Tate to Kevin Spacey at the Almeida - unmissable dates for your 1998 arts diary
ARTS

Anger and forgiveness as province buries its dead

Both sides of the religious divide buried their dead in Northern Ireland yesterday as the province braced itself for more trouble. In Coalsland, 1,000 people turned out for the funeral of Seamus Dillon, a former republican killer. Two hours later, a crowd twice that size gathered in Portadown for the funeral of "King Rat", Loyalist Volunteer Force leader Billy Wright. Steve Boggan reports.

It was dark by the time they put Billy Wright into the ground, his unmarked grave surrounded by thousands of mourners on a cold, dank day that did not bode well for peace.

For more than two hours his coffin had been carried through the hushed streets of Portadown, teams of bearers changing every few yards in line with his instructions.

Since his murder at the Maze prison last Saturday, and the Loyalist Volunteer Force's murder of Seamus Dillon, 45, in a retaliatory attack at a hotel in Dungannon, tension had been mounting.

The burial of the two victims yesterday did nothing to relieve it. Wright's family called for the resignation of Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, demanded a public inquiry into his murder and said legal action would follow. "Anything less [than a public inquiry] will permanently tarnish what credibility is left in the current British government," they said.

At Wright's funeral, photographers and cameramen had film torn from their cameras by leather-jacketed "stewards" while reporters were ordered to keep their distance. Businesses in the town were locked up from noon to 6pm after being leaflet-



Loyalist lament: Billy Wright's funeral cortege on its two-hour journey through the streets of Portadown yesterday

Photograph: David Rose

ted by the LVF; they feared reprisals if they remained open.

The streets outside Wright's home in Brownstown were lined with thousands of mourners as his coffin was carried the two miles to Seagoe cemetery, following a private service inside the house. The cortege was led by a lone piper and women carrying wreaths and was flanked by a 20-strong guard of honour.

Some 50 yards in front was a black car which carried four men dressed in para-

military uniforms. The LVF kept its promise not to display weapons or uniforms at the graveside, but it said a number of volunteers had fired a volley in memory of Wright, 37, at Antrim on Monday night.

At Wright's graveside - in accordance with his instructions - the Reverend John Gray, a Free Presbyterian minister, officiated and Pastor Kenny McClinton, a former Maze prisoner, spoke about Wright before delivering a sermon on redemption and salvation. "There is no doubt in my heart what-

soever that Billy Wright is in heaven at the feet of God," he said.

In Coalsland, where Seamus Dillon, 45, was buried, Sinn Féin MP Martin McGuinness was among the mourners. Fr Seamus Rice, the parish priest at St Mary and St Joseph's church, called for "dialogue and forgiveness".

He said Dillon's actions outside the Glengannon Hotel last Saturday probably saved many lives inside. There is a belief among nationalists that the LVF had in-

tended to go inside and spray people with bullets. Three others, including a 14-year-old boy, were wounded.

"When Seamus Dillon was brutally murdered, he gave his life saving the lives of others," said Fr Rice. "I have no doubt about that." Dillon's mother, Bridget, issued a statement saying she had already forgiven his killers. As icy darkness fell across Northern Ireland, the majority of the population was hoping her words would be enough to quell the rising tide of anger.

Edinburgh pulls up the drawbridge as TV rivals dig in for Hogmanay

Edinburgh will become a walled city tonight to reduce the risk of a Hillsborough-style tragedy at its Hogmanay celebrations. But restricting the number of New Year revellers won't diminish the challenge facing rival television networks endeavouring to bring the party atmosphere to viewers across Britain, finds Media Editor Rob Brown.

Organising a party in a city of breweries is harder than it sounds. Orchestrating live television coverage of a jam-packed open-air jamboree is even trickier in a part of the world where *al fresco* often means *al freezing*. "We're at the mercy of the elements" sighed Sandy Ross, executive producer of ITV's turn of the year show - and that was just yesterday's press launch he was referring to.

As co-presenters Anthea Turner and Philip Schofield braved wind and rain to pose for photographers in water-logged Princes Street Gardens, Mr Ross was entertaining no illusions about the technical challenge facing his 150-strong outside

broadcast team. "We have to get our 16 cameras in the right positions because once the party gets under way there will be almost a quarter of a million people making sure we can't move them around."

Still, he's immensely proud of the fact that his crews will be out in the thick of the action rather than smuggled up in the castle like their less intrepid counterparts from the BBC. "We're going to be at the real party whilst they might as well have stayed in their studio," said Mr Ross.

Actually, the Beeb would have a bit of a job constructing a set to equal the Scottish baronial splendour of the Great Hall at Edinburgh Castle, which will form the hub of its Hogmanay show. Its props department would also be fairly pushed to match the spears, swords, and other assorted medieval weaponry which festoons its oak-panelled walls.

Such an armoury, mixed with copious amounts of alcohol, means that the audience has had to be carefully pre-selected. Liz Soan, who has been producing Hogmanay shows for more than two decades, said: "Audiences are always very dodgy at New Year."

The BBC has enticed American folk legend James Taylor to cross the Atlantic for tonight's show, but the emphasis will be on traditional Scottish entertainment.



Wired: An electrician working on the set of the BBC's Hogmanay broadcast from the Great Hall at Edinburgh Castle

Photograph: Colin McPherson

ITV's offering will be far more contemporary. Topping its bill is Texas, a rock band which hails from Glasgow.

The BBC's programme will also be beamed across the Continent on the cable channel BBC Prime. "Edinburgh has become the happening place at Hogmanay," enthused Liz Scott. "Any Hollywood di-

rector would die for a set like the heart of Scotland's capital city."

And that's a Glaswegian talking. Sandy Ross, an Edinburgher born and bred, naturally concurs, although he's not so sure that many movie-makers in Tinseltown would relish a cast numbering a quarter of a million and rather the worse for drink.

Dancing and fireworks for new year revellers

If you're planning a New Year's Eve without a Celtic theme, think again. More than ever, write James Francken and Clare Garner, the best place to ring in the new year is Scotland.

If Robbie Williams forgot to reserve you a seat next to the Spice Girls on his table at Dublin's POD nightclub, and your invite to the Prodigy's mansion in southern Ireland is not forthcoming, there are countless - perhaps preferable - alternatives for tonight.

The Scots know how to remember their old acquaintances, and the hottest ticket is, once more, Edinburgh's Hogmanay. Now a four-day festival, from 29th to 1st, it has become so popular that for the first time this year numbers are limited. Last year, 300,000 revellers crammed into the Royal Mile and Princes Street. Crash barriers and street railings collapsed, and more than 300 injured saw in the new year in hospital.

In an effort to avoid a repeat performance, this year 180,000 passes were allocated on a first-come first-served basis. They were gone within a week but are now being sold for more than £10 on the black market. Beyond the enclosed area, which will be sealed off from 8pm, there will be nightclubs, balls and concerts.

Glasgow's George Square and the adjacent Merchant City is hosting "Dancing in the Streets". There will be six dance stages, including a hip-hop event and Pink Stage for the thriving gay scene, as well as fireworks and bells at midnight.

In Northern Ireland, Belfast City Council is staging its first New Year's Eve Celebration Party at the City Hall, with assembled jugglers, firebreathers and an Eagles coverband, culminating in a "sound and light show spectacular".

Five thousand merry-makers will be at the Colors event at Manchester's Nynex Arena, where Radio One's Pete Tong will be beamed in live from the Ministry of Sound via computer link. In Durham, bell-ringers at the cathedral will be ringing in 1998 from 10.30pm to 12.30am.

In London, there is always Trafalgar Square - if you must. Most restaurants nearby will be booked up, but for those wishing to line their stomachs near the melee, there is always the West End Kitchen, where dinner for around a fiver is being served until 11.45pm.

The London Evening Standard is setting off two tons of fireworks from Tower Bridge. For those not wishing to brave the elements, there is always the television. The Standard's display will be broadcast live on Sky News and you can choose between Carol Smilie and Anthea Turner for live Hogmanay reports.

Diary of a deadly week on the roads

Each month, Britain's roads claim 13 times the number of people killed by Aids. At this time of year, when the nation is alerted to the dangers of drink and driving, Jeremy Riggall and Randeep Ramesh examine the evidence of one damaging week on the roads.

It was a clear, quiet night in the Wiltshire countryside when a lone car shot through a roundabout and into a dry stone wall. The crash claimed the life of an 18-year-old waiter who had just finished a long shift at a busy restaurant.

Regulars knew the dead teenager, Philip, as a friendly, diligent waiter who had set his sights on becoming restaurant manager. But, on 7 December, it appears that on the four-mile journey home, Philip's eyes wandered from the road and the car careered into a stone wall, flinging Philip through the windscreen.

A survey of 51 police forces conducted by *The Independent* reveals that there were 60 fatalities on Britain's roads in the first week of December. Motoring organisations say that the determining factor in most accidents is "driver error".

No death in the survey could be easily categorised, and some appear avoidable. On the A1123 in Cambridgeshire, 25-year-old Laurie Williams died in hospital three days after crashing her Ford Orion into a stationary Land Rover, whose owner was helping to move another car from a ditch. On the outskirts of York, pensioner Kenneth Lyons drove out of a car park on to the wrong side of the road and crashed into an oncoming lorry. Nearly 3,600 lives were claimed last year. By comparison,

son, five Aids sufferers die each week and Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease kills three a month. Governments have reduced the toll. Since the peak of 8,000 deaths in 1966, there has been a steady decline in deaths, despite the fact that the number of licensed vehicles has increased by 89 per cent, and the volume of motor traffic has more than doubled.

Drink driving is the cause of 20 per cent of road fatalities, and "inappropriate" speeding is a major factor in a third of all casualties.

Motoring organisations also point out that many roads are "death traps". The RAC says that "Britain's most dangerous road" is a section of the A614 in Nottinghamshire which has claimed 10 lives since 1995.

Campaigners say that much more could be done to deter reckless driving. In 1996, there were 3,598 deaths on the road but only 346 drivers were charged with death by "dangerous driving". Most are charged with careless driving.

In Nottingham last year, a child was killed by a car travelling at more than 45mph through a zebra crossing. A 24-year-old woman was convicted of careless driving, receiving a fine of £500 and no driving ban.

Mary Williams, chief executive of Brake, the road safety organisation, said: "The charge of careless driving should be dropped... We need a simplified charging system with dangerous driving, death by dangerous driving and manslaughter."

The police are equally dissatisfied with the judicial system's handling of road fatalities. A spokesman for the Association of Chief Police Officers (Acpo) said: "We always hear about a government cracking down on drugs or crime. There are six hundred murders a year, but over 3,500 road deaths." *National Charity for Road Crash Victims: 0181-964 1021.*



Taste for danger: Motorists are being urged to concentrate fully on their driving, without the distractions of phones and food

Say no to food on the go

To the dangers of drivers chatting on their mobile phones has been added another threat - the munching motorist.

The RAC warned yesterday that snacking and steering had become rife, with drivers refusing to take proper meal breaks. Edmund King, the motoring organisation's head of campaigns, said: "People's busy lives now seem to preclude lunch breaks as they attempt to guzzle and go." The practice was extremely dangerous, he said.

RAC patrols have observed a wide range of eating experiences among motorists. One BMW driver was feeding a baby while driving around a corner. Another driver was eating a Chinese meal with chopsticks.

In keeping with the Christmas spirit, one motorist was trying to eat a full turkey leg while keeping on the road and one woman was spotted trying to pick mince pie crumbs from her cleavage. Another was eating trifle while negotiating a roundabout.

Mr King said: "We could hardly believe some of our patrols' observations. While the incidents mentioned may be amusing, the hazards they create for drivers and other road users should not be dismissed."

The perils of the eating motorist come in the wake of concern over mobile phone use in cars. Government research found that motorists using telephones, including hands-free devices, can be sufficiently distracted to be regarded as unsafe.

Baroness Hayman, the road safety minister, told peers in November that "there is an association between telephone use and increased accident risk".

Police in the West Midlands have begun a recent crackdown in which motorists seen using hand-held telephones have been issued with a £20 fixed penalty ticket or reported for prosecution.

— Louise Jury

M25 HEADS THE QUEUE OF BRITAIN'S TOP 10 ROADS TO HELL

Frustrated drivers have known it for ages, but now it is official - the M25 has the worst traffic jams in Britain.

Confirmation came from a survey of the country's most congested routes carried out by the Road Haulage Association.

After the M25, the next worst spot for jams was the M5-M6 interchange to the north-west of Birmingham.

Other routes best avoided included the M62 between Manchester and Leeds, the M4 near Newport in south Wales and the M80 between Glasgow and Stirling.

"This survey effectively acts as a map of Britain's 'Roads to Hell'," said RHA spokesman Daniel Hodges.

He added: "It shows there are now no areas of the country free from the social,

economic and environmental blight of traffic congestion.

"The 'congestion disease', which has gradually been clogging our nation's transport arteries over recent years, is now developing into a national epidemic."

The worst 10 routes for jams are:

1 The M25 between J11 and J13 in Surrey, at J25 in Hertfordshire and between

J28 and 29 near Brentwood in Essex

2 The M5/M6 interchange, north west of Birmingham

3 The M62 between Manchester and Leeds

4 The M4 surrounding Newport, south Wales

5 The M80 between Glasgow and Stirling

6 The A30 between Exeter and Honiton in Devon

7 The A1 western bypass,

between Newcastle upon Tyne and Washington in Tyne and Wear

8 The A63 from J38 on the M62 east of Hull to Hull Docks and Myton Bridge in Humberside

9 The Hangar Lane Gyration System in west London

10 The A14 between Huntingdon and the M11 in Cambridgeshire.

Denial over ID cards

New smart cards with "digital signatures", developed to help self-employed people cut down on form-filling, might be extended to perform more complex functions including paying tax, and ultimately acting as ID cards.

After being launched earlier this month by David Clark, the Cabinet Office minister, the smart cards, which contain their own microchip, are also being tested to see whether they could be used for a far wider set of tasks.

But the Government yesterday denied that the cards represented the introduction by the back door of ID cards. "The Government is not developing an ID card," said a Downing Street spokesman. "No decision has been made on whether ID cards will be introduced. The benefits and disadvantages need to be considered carefully."

Civil liberties groups have been increasingly concerned that cards containing more personal information, including the new driving licences with a passport-sized photo, could become a *de facto* ID card. But a "smart ID card" would be significant because it might mean that a person could be tracked electronically as their card was used. The idea of a card with a "digital signature", effectively an uncrackable PIN code, is that it would allow people to pay taxes, claim benefits and apply for passports by filling in an electronic form in a payphone-like kiosk, into which they could plug their card.

The card, which could lead to thousands of redundancies for civil servants, is one of the key proposals expected to be included in the Better Government White Paper next year.

Peter Kilfoyle, the public services minister, stressed that the cards would not be compulsory but admitted it could be difficult to operate in future without one. "If such a card was introduced for government purposes the civil liberties lobby would react very strongly because they would see it as the potential for an ID card. But these are some of the difficult choices that governments are going to have to take," he said.

A spokesman added: "The Government is committed to improving its services to the public and one of the best ways is by using the latest technology."

— Charles Arthur, Science Editor

Reform bill sounds final cut for the guillotine

The Government will begin its changes to the Commons in the New Year, with a deal over the Scotland Bill. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, says it spells goodbye to the parliamentary filibuster and hello to smart-card voting.

An extraordinary show of cross-party agreement will greet MPs when they return to the Commons after their New Year break, which is likely to herald the end for the filibuster and the guillotine.

Ann Taylor, the Leader of

the House, and the Commons negotiators for all the main opposition parties, including Gillian Shephard, Ms Taylor's shadow, the Scottish National Party and the Liberal Democrats have signed a joint motion agreeing to limit the time spent on each clause of the Scottish devolution Bill.

By keeping to a strict timetable, all the parties believe they will be able to achieve a better, more reasoned debate on the floor of the Commons on one of the most important constitutional Bills to be put through Parliament for a generation.

A cross-party select committee is expected to propose timetabling all Bills in the future. That would end the need for MPs to filibuster to put pressure on the Government over

single issues. Some MPs will argue that they are being robbed of one of their key weapons to hold up government business, but ministers would no longer need to impose a guillotine to cut off debate.

The move is the first important step by the Government in modernising the conduct of business in the House of Commons, and bringing the chamber out of the Victorian period and into the computer age. The Speaker, Betty Boothroyd, is studying more sensitive changes which could mean an end to the practice in which MPs - including women - were expected to don a top hat to make a point of order during a division.

A collapsible top hat is kept in reserve by the Commons

badge messengers but wearers were often the butt of jokes from their friends - Dennis Skinner has been known to sing "Give me the moonlight" at those donning the top hat.

In an end-of-year radio interview, Donald Dewar, the Secretary of State for Scotland, said the Scottish parliament would not be a "Trojan horse to independence". He hoped the other parties in the Scottish parliament would concentrate on domestic issues when it sits in 2000, instead of pressing for independence. "My hope and my wish is that, when the parliament does meet... we should get down to looking at what we are doing about the problems of housing in Scotland, what we are doing about delivering our promises in the health service," he said.



Donald Dewar: Concentrating on domestic issues, not independence

Good year for grouse

The moorlands of England are alive as never before - to the "cackling" cry of the grouse as populations look set to boom.

One expert described the situation as "the best for decades".

A fall in outbreaks of disease is thought to be the reason behind the trend and it was welcomed by Royal Society for the Protection of Birds spokesman Chris Hartward.

He said: "It was predicted earlier in the year that this would be a good one for grouse."

"But we have no real way of knowing figures until we get reports about the shoot-out bags. Grouse numbers do fluctuate and it's nice to hear that they are up following some poor years."

Phil Pugh, North of England spokesman for the British Association for Shooting and Conservation, said: "Disease has been less of a problem than in previous years, and there is a mood of confidence that the present situation will continue into next season."

Grouse populations have also remained high in Scotland.

John Phillips, Director of the Heather Trust, said: "1997 was a good year for grouse, as predicted. In a number of places this season it was the best for decades."

DAILY POEM

Maenad

by Ruth Fainlight

Once upon a time
I ranged the mountains
with the rest, the best, arms
raised high, head thrown back,
bright brief breast bare, etc.
etc. They said I looked
as if I had danced off the side
of an Attic vase.
My legs were strong. My nails were sharp.
My laugh was wild.

What happens next, after
frenzy and consummation,
after stumbling home, to swish
away the blood, pick
dark hairs from teeth and tongue,
vomit gobbers of fat and skin?
Time works the changes:
maenad - matron - crone - (who
still remembers how it felt:
everything).

This week's poems come from the five volumes shortlisted for the 1997 Whitbread Poetry Award. The winner will be announced next Tuesday, along with the other Whitbread winners for biography, fiction and first novels. "Maenad" is taken from Ruth Fainlight's *Sugar-Paper Blue* (Bloodaxe, £6.95).

Women's pay gap

The widening gap between the pay of men and women in the finance sector should be tackled urgently by employers, a banking union said yesterday.

Further evidence that female workers were being paid less came after Government statistics showed that women were earning 54.2 per cent of their male colleagues' basic weekly earnings.

The Banking Insurance and Finance Union said women's salaries had shrunk since 1995 and it called on employers to root out discrimination.

Jo Seary, of BIFU, said: "Far from catching up, women in finance are falling further behind in pay. That's very often because women are still largely confined to the lowest paid grades."

"Contrary to popular belief low pay is a serious problem in the finance industry - almost one in eight staff earn less than £4 an hour."

While women now outnumber men in the workplace for the first time in peacetime history, the Government New Earnings Survey said female managers experienced slower wage rises.

In 1993, women in senior positions earned 67.3 per cent of their male counterparts and that figure has now fallen to 60.4 per cent.

GPs warn on change

Plans to reform general practice could lead to more waiting lists, shorter consultation times and rationing, doctors' leaders warned yesterday.

Dr John Chisholm, chairman of the British Medical Association's GPs committee, said that family doctors in the National Health Service were "very concerned" about moves by a government working party to find a formula to ensure that GP resources are fairly distributed.

He claimed that if recommendations, which include using GP consultation rates to determine cash allocations, were accepted by ministers it could mean that patients were put on hospital-type waiting lists to see their family doctor. But the Department of Health said that every patient was ensured access to a GP under law and work was already under way to ensure equal access to GPs across the country.

The working party was set up by the Department of Health earlier this year to look at ways of bringing about more equal distribution of GPs, their staff and resources. Recommendations are due to be made to health ministers in about eight months.

Dr Chisholm said that general practice could not be run in the same way as hospitals and had to be based on patient need. He and his colleagues are concerned that if money is allocated according to the number of GP consultations - one of the ideas being considered by the working party - it will lead to larger GP lists, shorter consultation times and longer patient lists for GPs.

He said: "General practice is demand led. We cannot have a situation where prescription pads are locked away and surgeries have to close 10 months of the year because GPs have already run out of money that has been allocated."

"General practice is the safety valve of the NHS and once you block it, the whole service is at risk. You can close a hospital, you can delay an operation, but you can't close down general practice. GPs' surgeries are the front door of the health service, and GPs must be there to react to demand that changes throughout the year."

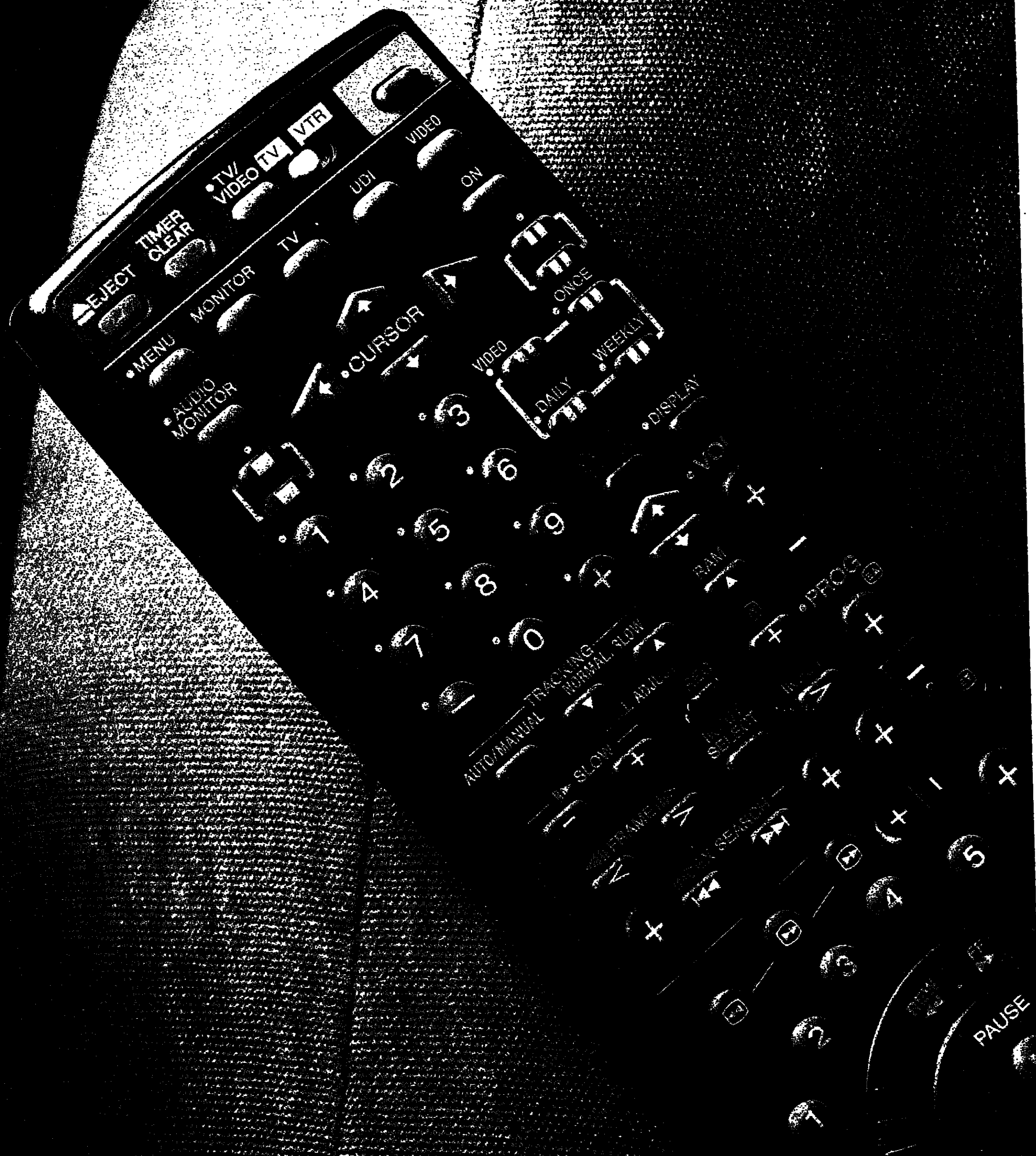
Say no to food on the go

The dangers of eating on the go are well known. It's not just the mess and the risk of choking, but the fact that you're often eating too fast, which can lead to indigestion and other problems. The RAC warns that eating on the go is a major cause of road accidents. It says that drivers who are eating while driving are more likely to be involved in an accident than those who are not. The RAC says that drivers who are eating while driving are more likely to be involved in an accident than those who are not. The RAC says that drivers who are eating while driving are more likely to be involved in an accident than those who are not.

GPs wait on change

The General Practitioners' Association (GPA) has announced that it will be waiting on change. This means that GPs will be able to wait on change for their patients. The GPA says that this will be a major step forward for the profession. It says that this will allow GPs to wait on change for their patients, which will be a major step forward for the profession. It says that this will allow GPs to wait on change for their patients, which will be a major step forward for the profession.

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Wish things were written in plain English?

Thanks to new technology, the English language gains thousands of new words each year. Recent additions include 'wysiwyg', 'quaqma' and 'zift'. Few people know what they mean. (You can find out on p17.)

Supermarkets with a finger in every pie

As political donors, patrons of the arts and sponsors of public education and charities, the supermarket bosses are exerting influence over our lives even when we are not consuming their goods. Ian Burrell traces their web of power.

It was the furore last month following stories that Lord Sainsbury had donated £1m to the Labour Party which confirmed the supermarket chiefs as the all-powerful industrial barons of our time.

Until then they had managed to hide behind their vast corporate public relations budgets to project an image of caring service providers or extended family grocers.

But the donation gave rise to speculation as to just how much influence the supermarkets could generate with their enormous collective wealth.

The big four supermarkets (Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda and Safeway) have a combined annual turnover of over £40bn and make pre-tax profits of £2.1bn. Lord Sainsbury's private family wealth is estimated at £2.5bn.

The news of the Sainsbury chairman's political patronage immediately prompted questions about a possible hidden agenda. The supermarkets, it was observed, had been experiencing rebuffs from planning authorities over their proposals to build out-of-town superstores.

Prior to the election, Lord Sainsbury and senior representatives from Tesco and Safeway had met Tony Blair to complain about the tough planning guidelines on out-of-town stores, imposed by the then Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer.

Since the election, Lord Sainsbury has been made a Labour peer and Sainsbury's has been given the go-ahead for a large-scale project at Richmond upon Thames which had run into local opposition.

Mr Blair said that to link the Richmond decision to the donation was "rubbish" and "ridiculous". Nevertheless, the

row ensured that the public now saw supermarket chiefs as political animals as well as the people who sold them nice things and made their lives easier.

It was not, in fact, Lord Sainsbury's first foray into political patronage. In the 1980s, he had helped to finance the Social Democratic Party.

Other supermarket giants have strong links to the Conservative Party, under whose government they grew into the corporate giants they are today.

Archie Norman, chairman of Asda, is now Tory MP for Tunbridge Wells, and the company retains Lowe Bell, the public relations firm established by Baroness Thatcher's close adviser Tim Bell, for promotion and lobbying.

Safeway, under its previous name, Argyll Group, made a one-off donation of £30,000 to the Tories in 1992-93. Tesco was also linked to the Tories through former Westminster Council leader Dame Shirley Porter, daughter of the Tesco founder, Sir Jack Cohen.

In the arts, various branches of the Sainsbury family privately support the Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery and the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts at the University of East Anglia. As a company, Sainsbury's sponsors community-based projects as part of its Arts for All scheme, mainly aimed at encouraging participation in theatre, music, ballet and opera.

Supermarkets are also increasingly looking to promote themselves by providing money for schools. Sainsbury's runs a Schoolbags voucher scheme, in which 17,000 schools took part last year. Vouchers, issued for every £10 spent in the store, can be exchanged for school equipment. Tesco has a Computers for Schools scheme, offering vouchers for every £25 spent in-store. The company says 11,000 schools took part in the scheme over the last year, claiming computer equipment worth £5m.

Asda set up the Asda Foundation over five years ago, with the promise to double any money raised by its stores for local charities. Last year the company raised a total of £1m. Tesco also makes an annual £1m donation to a selected charity.



Artistic licence: The Sainsbury Wing at the National Gallery, just one of the arts and community-based projects supported by the family

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

What next after superstores and 24-hour opening?

Men in baseball caps are trying to dress you up: Asda, once the loser in the supermarket race, has been revived with huge malls which sell everything from pizza and CDs to (quite) funky clothes. Jojo Moyes reports on a Northern success story.

You don't expect to see supermarket clothes in the fashion pages - let alone clothes from Asda. Yet in the past five years the once poor relation of supermarkets has overtaken Safeway in terms of market value and sales - with its "George" range of clothing

leading the re-emergence. The supermarket has even held talks about a merger with Safeway that would leave it as the dominant partner.

Two men are responsible: 43-year-old Archie Norman, the headline-grabbing chairman who went "part time" to become a Tory MP; and Allan Leighton, chief executive.

Asda was a latecomer to supermarket retailing. When Mr Norman took over, many observers thought the company was finished. As a result, Mr Norman has a huge personal stake in it: "I feel the company is part of me, and I am very devoted to it," he has said.

He is now attempting to do for the Tories what he did for Asda. A keen political animal (he was at Cambridge Uni-

versity at the same time as Michael Portillo, was chairman of the Conservative Association in 1975, and is now MP for Tunbridge Wells), Mr Norman has introduced some of his management concepts to the Tory party - as witnessed by the recent "bonding" weekend attended by William Hague.

"I don't believe at all in the classic British boardroom manager style," he has said. "The style of government should be open and politicians should talk to people as people at their level."

Mr Leighton, who now ef-

fectively holds the reins at Asda, spent 17 years at Mars before moving through Pedigree Petfoods to Asda, where he became chief executive in September last year.

Between them, the two men have overseen a huge change in management culture. During the first phase, named "renewal" they took to calling the employees "colleagues"; abolished individual offices (even for the chairman); and introduced the wearing of baseball hats for people who didn't want to be disturbed.

After "renewal" came

"breakout", now succeeded by "formula for growth". Asda has 216 stores, most of which are bigger than the competition's at around 40,000 sq ft. The next push is for hypermarkets of 60,000 sq ft or so, to display George Davies' "George" brand of clothing to best advantage.

Mike Dennis, food retail analyst at Societe Generale Strauss Turnbull, says that Asda's future lies in building up its "market hall" concept, whereby customers can visit a delicatessen, pizza place or other "shop" within the store, and feel they are getting a personalised service.

The decision to launch the George clothing range, says Mr Dennis, enables Asda to use its warehouse-sized stores to

mark itself out as different. "They're making parts of their in-store offer a unique reason to go that store. If they can get you in on the George label, then you buy everything else there," says Mr Dennis.

"All retailers are trying to find a point of difference, and Asda has a large format store where they can do that with authority."

Asda is now moving into non-traditional supermarket areas, such as CDs and entertainment, as well as piloting 24-hour stores. This Christmas, it went one better and appeared to be expanding into religion. Stores throughout the land broadcast a service led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. From "George" to George Carey? It seems to be working.

TOMORROW

Where will the supermarkets go: More Calvin Klein in the aisles - or does the future lie with "Roboshop"?

Mysterious tale of the missing railway stations

Has rail privatisation brought progress? Only if you don't want to go to railway stations. Charles Arthur tries to crack the code to discover that most secret of facts: the address of Darlington railway station.

"Hello, this is the National Rail Enquiry Service, how can I help?"
"Could I have the address of Darlington railway station?"
"Just let me check. We haven't got the address."

"You haven't? But I need to pick someone up there and I've never been to Darlington. Do you have the phone number for it?"

"No. We don't have any phone numbers for stations - they're all ex-directory and we're not allowed to give them out."

"Er... would Railtrack have the number, then?"
"No - they just own the line. The train operating companies own the station."

Confused? Of course. Just when it seemed that the privatised rail world could not get weirder, it simply becomes Kafkaesque. Like M15, railways stations now don't ap-

pear in phone books for "security reasons". Apparently, train operating companies found that passengers (or "customers") kept ringing up their staff to find out information - such as how to get to the station.

Since privatisation, every railway station has moved ex-directory - so that now you cannot find a phone number for London's largest stations, such as Victoria or St Pancras.

The problem is compounded for would-be travellers who know only their points of departure and destination, rather than which company they will be travelling with - since the latter information is required before tickets for the journey

can be booked. Robert Heller, author of *Catch-22*, would be proud.

During the (true) conversation above, the NRES operator suggested calling the train operating company - which, for the (randomly-chosen) journey from London to Darlington was Great North Eastern Railways.

I dialled the number NRES had given me.

"Hello, Guardian Royal Assurance."

"I'm sorry, I thought I was calling GNER."

"Oh, we've been having problems with this since at least mid-December. The number the enquiry people have been

giving out is wrong. There's a digit wrong." She gave me an amended number. I called it. Nobody answered.

The Office of the Rail Regulator said that usually the complaints from rail users arise when they already have the railway station's number and call it, but are referred to the NRES - which is meant to be connected to Railtrack's computer, which should know exactly how close to schedule each train in Britain is.

"All the stations seem to have gone ex-directory," said the spokesman. "But you aren't encouraged to ring them. As to the addresses, I think they're working on the basis that sta-

Where is it? Like all other stations, St Pancras in London is no longer listed in the telephone directory

Photograph: David Rose

tions are always signposted, and usually fairly central." Not always; and if you're trying to reach them by bus the correct address is not always obvious.

There's no simple answer to the question about where you can get information about where a station is situated. Railtrack doesn't have the wherewithal to deal with people's enquiries. It owns the stations, and leases them to the train operating companies, so it's them you should ring."

He gave me a number for GNER, which I tried.

"GNER, which department?"

"Actually I'd just like to know the address for Darlington Station."

"Just let me check. It's Victoria Road," said the woman. It had only taken the best part of the day, including six phone calls (two to Directory Enquiries) to find out something that used to be free in phone books. Oddly, it didn't feel like progress.

Customers allowed to keep old telephone numbers

Telephone users will be able to keep their old numbers when they switch telephone companies under an agreement announced yesterday. The move is expected to spur on more households to swap companies in a bid to get a better deal by removing the hassle of having to change numbers.

The agreement covers all the major telephone companies who will have new terms written into their licences obliging them to let customers keep their numbers if they defect to rival companies.

Until now, only BT has been obliged to let customers keep their numbers.

Since June last year, more than 150,000 telephone numbers have been switched between companies - now running at around 5,000 a week.

Don Cruickshank, director general of the industry regulator Ofcom, said there was clearly demand for "number portability" and said today's move was good news for phone users.

Porn station to be outlawed

The Government is within days of formally confirming its plans to outlaw a French-based satellite porn channel, it emerged yesterday. A spokesman for the Department of Culture, Media and Sport said a decision by Chris Smith, the Secretary of State, would be "announced shortly".

A ban on the selling and advertising of the smart cards required to receive the programmes seems certain, after the Independent Television Commission asked in October that the Government proscribe the Eurotica channel.

The ban will have to be on the marketing of the decoding equipment because it is not possible to stop the programme being beamed into Britain from another country.

It is not expected that action would be taken against existing British viewers of the channel who already have the necessary unscrambling devices.

But ministers are thought to believe the equipment ban will deny the channel the revenue it requires to continue.

Gales blow in for New Year

Gales which battered the country over Christmas were set to return last night, ushering in a stormy start to the New Year. Experts said the storms would be less severe than those which hit the country last week but warned they could gain force over the next few days.

The north-west and Scotland were expected to be the hardest hit, with rain and winds of up to 70mph forecast. Temperatures were expected to be mild - up to 12C (54F) - but will feel colder because of the strong southerly winds.

Partner questioned as fears grow for missing mother

A mother of four last seen going out to buy Christmas presents eight days ago was still missing yesterday.

Lisa Blunt, 23, vanished after leaving her Nottingham home for a last-minute shopping trip on 22 December.

Police said her partner, Vincent Shilton, 29, was being voluntarily questioned by de-

tectives looking for Ms Blunt. Officers have also been searching the couple's home and garden in Raymede Close, Bestwood, Nottingham, where neighbours said it was would have been out of character for her to leave her children before Christmas.

Ms Blunt has lived at the address for three years after moving

from the Clifton Estate, on the other side of the city.

Neighbours said Mr Shilton moved into the three-bedroomed semi 18 months ago and the couple had a baby daughter, Kylie, in June this year. It is thought that he left his wife and their three children after meeting Ms Blunt in early 1996.

Ms Blunt's children, Jade, aged five, Dale, four, Daniel, two, and baby Kylie, are being cared for by relatives.

Neighbour Patricia Johnson said Ms Blunt was "devoted to her children" but added that she had become withdrawn in recent months.

"We thought she might have post-natal depression... I saw

her on the Friday before Christmas and she looked really down in the dumps... We got more worried as time goes on. Now we hope that she has got post-natal depression and that she will come back.

Mr Shilton appealed yesterday for Ms Blunt to get in touch. "We just want to know you are all right," he said.

A Nottinghamshire police spokesman stressed that Mr Shilton had not been arrested and had given his permission for a "thorough examination" of the house and garden.

He added that they were "increasingly concerned" because Ms Blunt had now missed Christmas and her son Dale's fourth birthday on Monday.

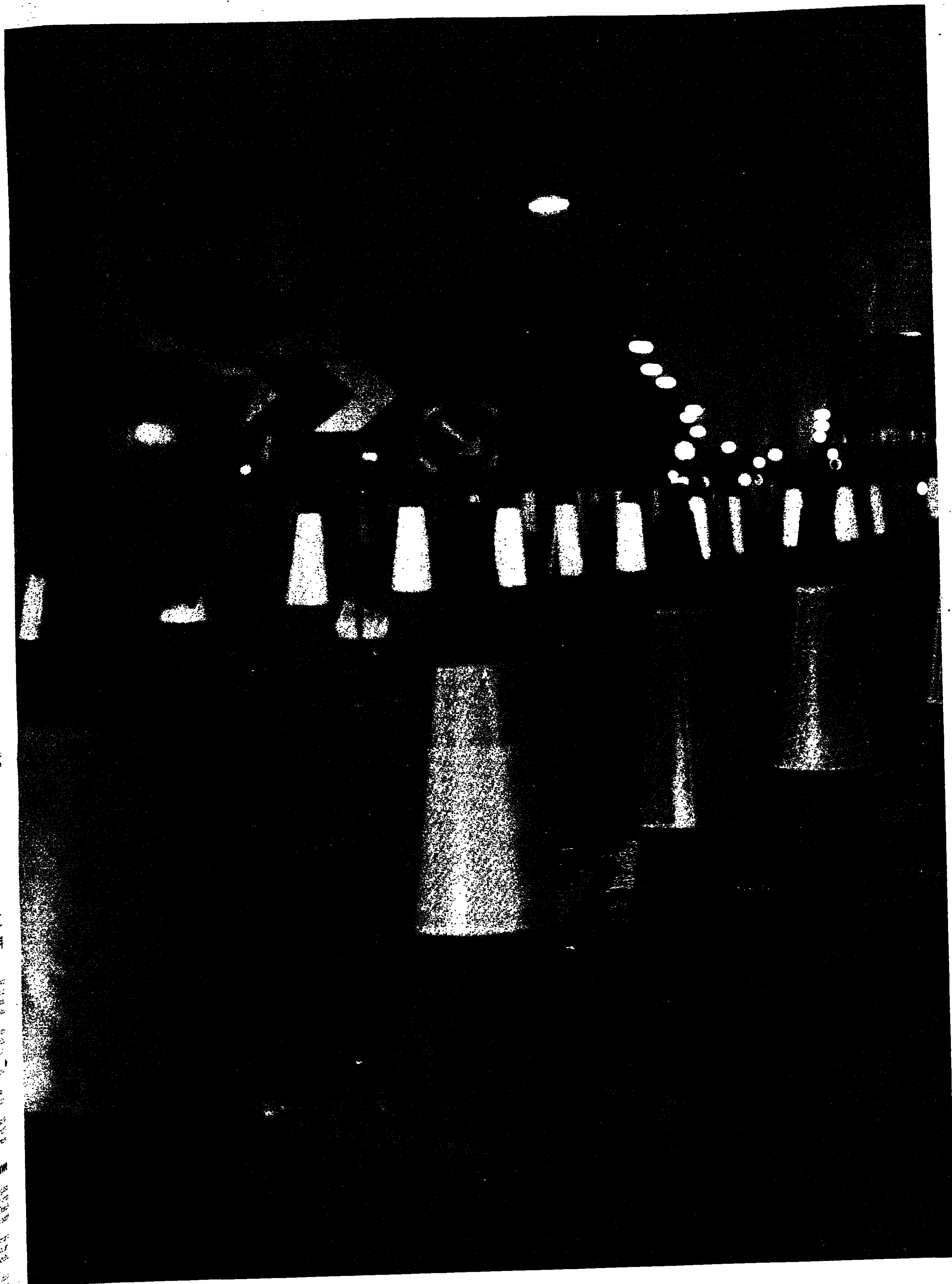
صحنه من الازهر

opening?

tomers allowed to keep
telephone numbers

m station to be outlawed

les blow in for New York



Wish your queue was moving quicker?

The average person spends a year and a half of their adult life queuing. No wonder we get agitated.
How long before someone does something about it?

Russians on red alert as rouble is reinvented

Nerves are jangling in Russia over tomorrow's introduction of the new rouble. As Phil Reeves reports from Moscow, it comes at a jittery time.

Amid deep suspicion and considerable grumbling from those who will use it, Russia's kopek will tomorrow be brought back to life after an absence of some six years.

The resurrection of the coin comes with the redenomination of the rouble, which has acquired an ungainly trail of zeros after tumbling spectacularly in the first half of the decade.

From New Year's Day, the rouble will lose three of its noughts. A pair of jeans that now costs the deafening 400,000 roubles should, if all goes well, retail at a more respectable 400. With an anticipated six roubles to the dollar, the kopek will be worth a mighty one sixth of a cent.

But that "if" is, in the eyes of many Russians, alarmingly large. Distrust of the government runs deep when it comes to money.

Two previous changes in the currency in the last seven years were badly mis-handled and led to panic. Millions will never forget how hyperinflation of up to 2,600 per cent a year wiped out their savings, vapourising an estimated total of \$17bn.

Since then, the government has restored the rouble to stability by maintaining it within a corridor, a policy that has helped pull inflation down to less than 12 per cent this year.

But it has not been easy, particularly in the last few months. The fiscal crisis in South-east Asia sent foreign and domestic investors scurrying back into the safer

arms of the dollar, prompting Russia to pour several billion dollars of its reserves into defending the rouble.

When Mikhail Gorbachev tried to reduce money supply in January 1991 by ordering the population to hand in 50- and 100-rouble notes, there was chaos, largely because he only gave them three days to do so.

The Yeltsin administration is trying to make a better fist of things. The old roubles will circulate alongside the new for a year, and it will be possible to exchange them in banks for five years.

The government has run an advertising campaign, commandeering revered Soviet-era actors to issue televised assurances that there is no cause for people to be alarmed.

Russians remain sceptical, however. The reaction of Marina Dobkina, 49, a school director, was typical: "Nothing will change for the better. Prices will go up. Though all actors announce on television that nothing will change, prices are growing just before the event. The leaders never miss a chance, do they?"

The Central Bank's new notes look very like the old ones. This is sensible, though dull. Over the years, Russia has had some eccentric currency. In 1896, the 100-rouble note was printed in a rainbow of colours, with Catherine the Great in the centre. In 1919, when the Bolsheviks harboured ambitions of world revolution, the Soviets produced notes with the hammer and sickle on the front with the slogan "Workers of the World Unite" in Russian, Chinese, Japanese, French and Italian. Lenin didn't appear on money until 1938.

The new Russia has produced notes boringly ornamented by the national flag flying over the Kremlin.



Currency affairs: Two women shopping in Moscow, where concern is running high over plans to redenominate the rouble

Photograph: Lehtikuvva/Rex

White House caught out over envoy's mission to Iran

Reports that a senior US congressman was travelling to Iran to contact Tehran's moderate leaders prompted denials in Washington. Mary Dejevsky says it may herald a thaw in relations between the two countries.

The reports that President Bill Clinton had sent Senator Tom Lantos as a special envoy coin-

cided with the opening of the first natural gas pipeline between the former Soviet republic of Turkmenistan and Iran. This event illustrates the difficulties faced by the United States if it persists in trying to isolate Iran.

There had been rumours in Washington of unofficial contacts between the US and Iran since before Iran's new president, Mohammad Khatami, extended his olive branch earlier this month, expressing respect for the "great people of the United States". Washington had

denied there had recently been unofficial contacts between US and Iranian officials in Europe.

This week's reports were more substantial. The official news agency of the United Arab Emirates quoted "informed sources" as saying President Clinton had sent Senator Lantos, a Democrat from California, to Iran to assess whether hints of changes in Iranian foreign policy were genuine.

The senator's office was initially uncommunicative and the White House denied the report. But the wording of the denial -

that the President "has no plans to send a special envoy to Iran" left questions. Had an envoy already been sent? Having "no plans" did not preclude the possibility. If tentative diplomatic moves were to be made, then the quiet dispatch of a presidential envoy when the Western world was otherwise engaged would be one way to do it.

The State Department, which has been zealous in implementing the policy of "dual containment", which is designed to isolate Iran and Iraq simultaneously, was more forthcom-

ing. It said Mr Lantos was considering a trip to Iran and had broached the subject with the White House and the State Department, but: "It's something that we would discourage."

Mr Lantos himself was said to be spending the holiday in his California district, but officials said they understood he had not yet received an Iranian visa. This suggested that he had applied for a visa and that a trip was in the offing. The question is whether unintended publicity might cause it to be called off. The task of keeping both

Iran and Iraq equally isolated has proved increasingly difficult, as other countries have moved to improve relations. Although the official response to President Khatami's overture was cool, Mr Clinton disclosed shortly before Christmas that the administration was discussing relations with Iran.

US hesitation appears to reflect both concern not to be deceived into warming relations prematurely but also conflicting views about whether President Khatami either wants, or can soften, Iranian policy.

Children 'enslaved' by Third World debt crisis

The servicing of unpayable debts to the West is draining the Third World as surely as slavery drained the African continent for centuries, a new report by the charity Christian Aid claims. More than 1 million people are estimated to have died in passage during the Atlantic slave trade. But the modern debt crisis could cause the unnecessary deaths of 21 million children before the millennium, according to the report, "The New Abolitionists". Where slaves were once sold with a price attached to them, children are now born with a debt around their necks. In Tanzania, each new baby owes in the region of \$250 (£152) and in Mozambique \$350 a head.

Andrew Simms, one of the report's authors, said: "Servicing the debt is as sure a drain on capital resources as the slave trade was a haemorrhage of human and social capital." He and co-author Jenny Reindorp argue the time is ripe, as the millennium approaches, for a new band of abolitionists to fight for the cancellation of Third World debt just as Clarkson and Wilberforce fought for the abolition of slavery. They claim the debts would have been written off if they had been owed by private companies. The dramatic comparisons with Old World slavery signal the intention of Christian Aid, and others in the Jubilee 2000 coalition on Third World debt, to put pressure on world leaders in the run-up to the G8 heads of state meeting in Birmingham in May to write off much of the debt.

— Louise Jury

Algerian slaughter spreads

Ninety-seven Algerian civilians were killed in massacres at fake roadblocks, hamlet raids, a bomb explosion and other attacks, Algerian dailies said yesterday. The throats of 34 villagers - mostly women and children - were allegedly cut on Sunday and Monday in the Medea area. The latest violence brings the number of civilians killed in the past six days to more than 300.

— Reuters, Paris

Old friend fights for Kaunda

Tanzania's former president Julius Nyerere is close to securing the freedom of his friend, former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda. Mr Nyerere is in the Zambian capital, Lusaka, for talks with President Frederick Chiluba on Mr Kaunda's detention. Mr Kaunda, 73, who ruled Zambia from independence in 1964 until 1991, is in a maximum security jail and has been on a hunger strike since his arrest on Christmas Day.

— Reuters, Soko

Students protest in Kosovo

Riot police baton-charged Albanian students demonstrating in the capital of Serbia's Kosovo province yesterday for the right to be re-admitted to university. The students and their teachers claim they were evicted in 1991 when the Serbian authorities suspended tuition in the Albanian language.

— Reuters, Pristina

Model of farm productivity

Sunny Boy (right) has gone to that big pasture in the sky. The record-holding Dutch bull, whose sperm was sold to dairy farms worldwide, was put to sleep after suffering pain in his urinary tract. Over eight years, Sunny Boy produced up to 2 million doses of semen. There are only about half a dozen bulls in the world that have reached the 1 million mark. Holland Genetics said.

— AP, Arnhem



Moi attack on poll fuels Kenya chaos

The threadbare credibility of Kenya's elections was frayed paper-thin yesterday after President Daniel arap Moi's ruling party accused the electoral commission of conspiring to rig the polls against it.

The surprise claim by the Kenyan African National Union followed similar claims on Monday by irate opposition candidates. They had accused the government-appointed electoral commission of deliberately sowing chaos to help Mr Moi's party rig the vote.

Voting in parallel presidential, parliamentary and local elections began on Monday but had to be extended by an extra day yesterday as farcical scenes of incompetence and error prevented or delayed polling in many areas.

The chaos followed a bitter and at times bloody campaign, in which Kanu was widely accused of seeking to rig ballots and buy votes to extend its 34-year rule.

On Monday night, the leading opposition presidential candidate, Mwai Kibaki, said the

irregularities were worse in anti-government areas and accused the electoral commission of conspiring with Kanu to win a fifth term for the increasingly unpopular Mr Moi, who has ruled Kenya for the last 19 years.

Another candidate, Charity Ngilu, alleged the elections were being rigged after she found thousands of ballot papers without stamps and hundreds of similar voter cards in the commission's offices in her constituency.

In the Rift Valley town of Eldoret, normally a Kanu stronghold, hundreds of opposition supporters took to the streets in protest at the handling of the election. There was also a tense stand-off in Kisii, Nyanza Province, where over 300 voters besieged a polling station which refused to allow them in yesterday morning.

Last night, three people were reported killed in election-related violence.

At a press conference yesterday, Kanu officials denounced the electoral



People's choice: A police officer guards ballot boxes in Nairobi City Hall. Voting continued yesterday Photograph: Reuters

commission, chaired by Mr Moi's appointee, Samuel Kivuiti, and comprising representatives of Kanu and the big opposition parties. The party chief executive, Geoffrey Kathurima, said Kanu and its

candidates in many areas were being targeted "by elements of the electoral commission" by monitoring the counting of votes which began yesterday.

But Kanu officials declined to endorse opposition calls for the elections to be abandoned

and corrupt machinations of the electoral commission" by monitoring the counting of votes which began yesterday.

But Kanu officials declined to endorse opposition calls for the elections to be abandoned

and restaged. "There would not be any point in another election because the results have not come out," Mr Kathurima said. "We don't expect to lose. Kanu is winning."

— Ed O'Loughlin, Nairobi

Bandit frees hostages and abandons plan to shower Milan with money

A tense 24-hour hostage crisis in a Milan bank came to a safe, almost tragi-comic conclusion yesterday as the lone bandit, armed with a hand grenade and a sawn-off shotgun, released his four hostages one by one and gave up his dream of dropping hundreds of banknotes out of

a helicopter to celebrate New Year's Eve.

It started out as a war of nerves between the assailant, Domenico Gargano, and law-enforcement officials sitting outside the suburban branch of the Banca Popolare di Milano. The first big breakthrough came in the ear-

ly hours of yesterday, as the manager of the bank, Irma Morello, was released in exchange for 4bn lire in cash - around £1.5m. It then became apparent that Gargano, a 35-year-old Sicilian with a long criminal record in recycling stolen goods, had no escape

plan. Indeed, rather than negotiating a low-profile exit from the bank building with his loot, he asked for a helicopter from which he could drop the banknotes over the city.

The police had been considering handing over more money to safeguard the remaining

two hostages (the first had been released on Monday) but concluded they had a fairly harmless fruitcake on their hands.

By mid-morning, Pietro Ferreri, 53, who was completing his last day at work before taking early retirement, was released. In mid-afternoon Gargano

threw a wad of banknotes out of a first-floor window; two hours later he released his remaining hostage, deputy manager Vincenzo Cortellini, handed over his weapons and negotiated his own future with a magistrate and a Carabinieri officer.

— Andrew Gumbel, Rome

صكنا من الامل

ONE SIZE
FITS ALL

Children 'enslaved' by
World debt crisis

erian slaughter spreads

friend fights for Kaunda

Students protest in Kosovo

Model of farm productivity

Wish things were designed with you in mind?

The tallest man in history was 8 feet 11 inches tall. The smallest was about the height of this page. It's highly unlikely, therefore, that one size fits all. Better to treat people as individuals.

Coastguards send their last messages in Morse code

Any mariner thinking of learning Morse code to send out that vital SOS message might be better off practising their breast stroke. From midnight tonight no one will be listening. Stephen Goodwin, Heritage Correspondent, reports on the decline of a mechanical language.

Farewell messages will be tapped out in dots and dashes tonight from Land's End, Port Patrick, Cullercoats and Wick as British Telecom ceases its Morse code watchkeeping on the emergency 500kHz wavelength.

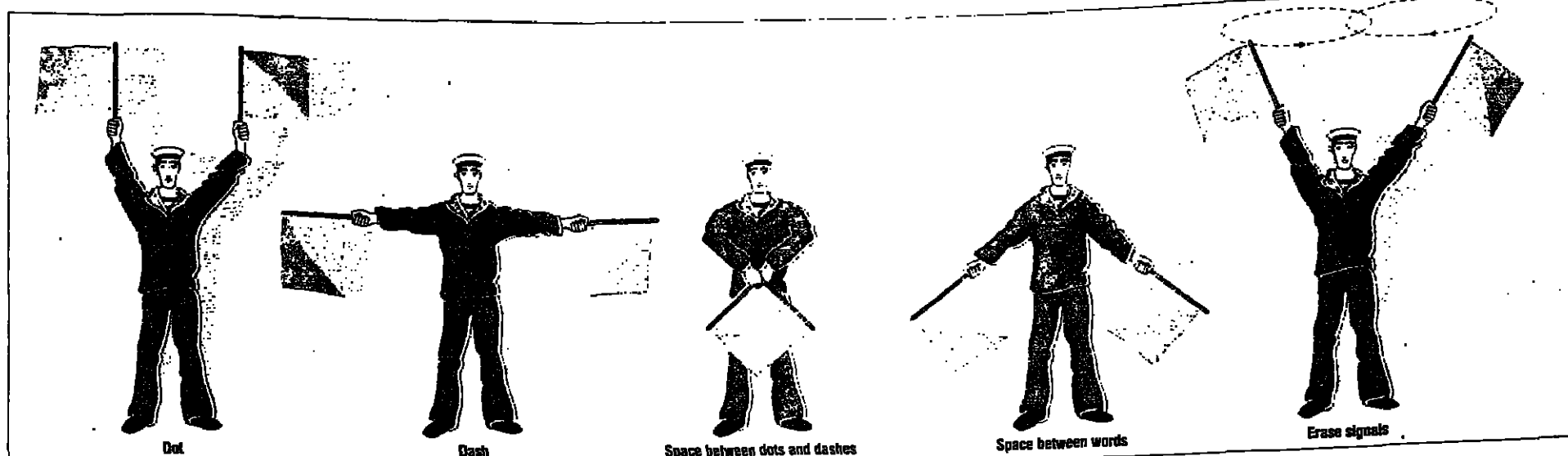
Satellite communication has superseded the code devised 160 years ago by the American painter Samuel Morse. And for all the sentimentality surrounding a system where skilled operators claimed to be able to recognise a woman's touch over the airwaves, the new technology is far superior.

Morse, as a language of distress, is following semaphore into maritime history. The Royal Navy ceased training sailors in the use of the code for wireless transmission last summer, although it still preserves the skill for sending signals by flashing lamp. Messages were sent by lamp during the Falklands War – unlike radio signals, they are not vulnerable to electronic surveillance.

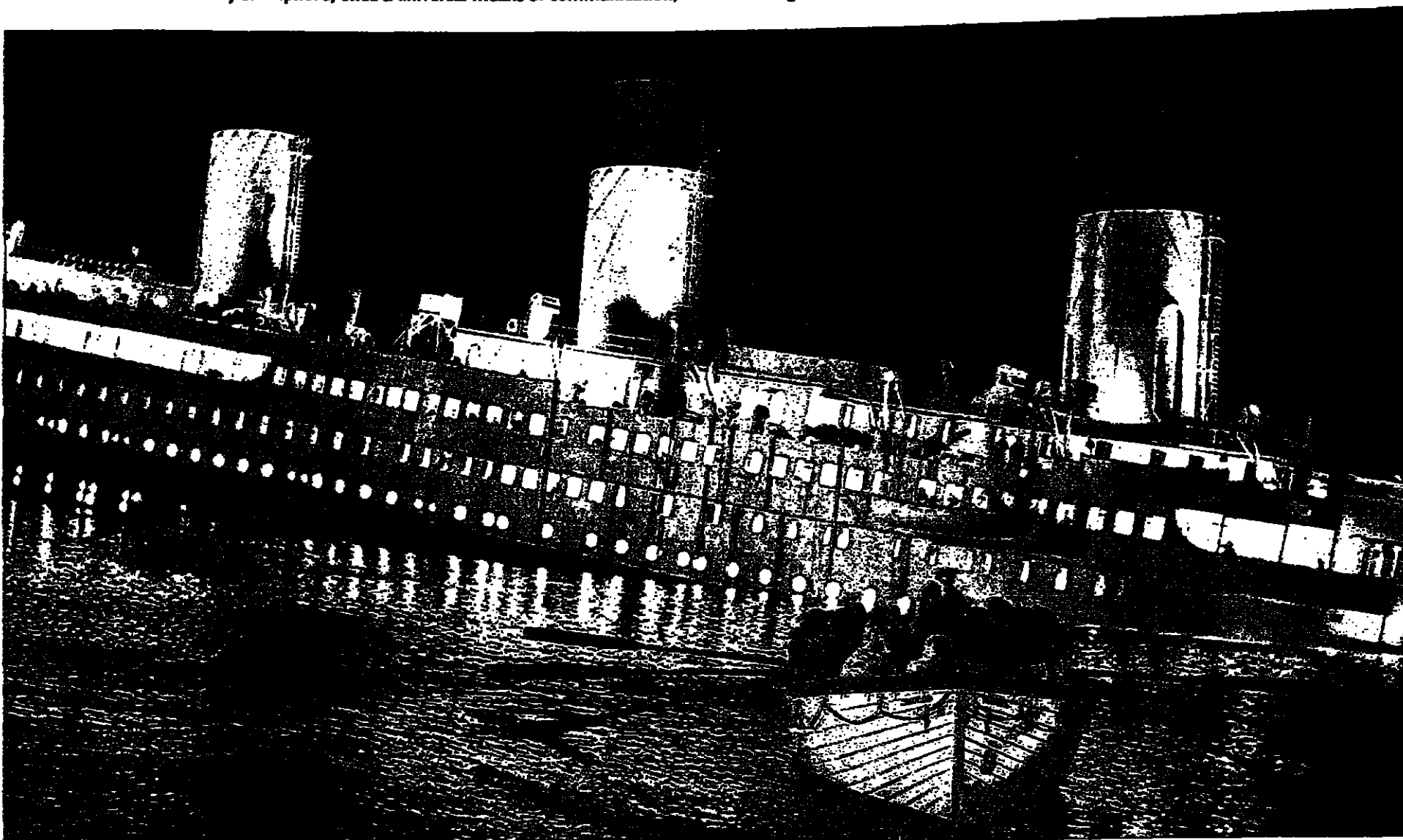
As for semaphore, sending signals by holding a flag in each hand at designated positions, RN spokesmen contacted yesterday could not recall when that ended. Signal flags are still used by the Navy to dress ships overall, run up the "England expects" command on HMS Victory and for practical warnings when a vessel is clearing mines or loading munitions.

Amateur sailors are required to learn neither Morse nor semaphore. "Do the Sea Scouts still learn semaphore?" wondered the Royal Yachting Association which trains people in the use of radio telephones and other modern technology such as the emergency beacon which a year ago saved the life of yachtsman Tony Bullimore.

Samuel Morse sent his first message by telegraph line from Baltimore to Washington in 1839. "What hath God wrought," it said. It took Marconi's invention of wireless telegraphy to make the code of any use to shipping, but within only a couple years it was saving lives. The first Morse-initiated rescue was just



End of an era: Morse code by semaphore, once a universal means of communication, is now no longer recognised by the emergency services.



Signal from the past: The film *Titanic* shows passengers taking to the lifeboats; many were saved thanks to the Morse CQD and SOS calls.

100 years ago when the *Deutschland* ran aground on the Goodwin Sands off Dover.

The code is credited with saving the lives of many who took to the lifeboats when the *Titanic* struck an iceberg in 1912. The liner first sent out the CQD – come quick, disaster – call sign in use at the time and then

switched to SOS: dot dot dash dash dash, dot dot dash dash dash.

The *Carpathia* picked up the message. Morse was used to announce the ceasefires after two world wars, and was instrumental in the arrest of Dr Crippen – the American poisoner was the first criminal caught through the use of radio telegraphy.

Commercial and other uses of Morse will continue, for example through BT's long-range station at Portishead in Somerset. What is ending at midnight is the monitoring carried by BT on behalf of the Coastguard service. Messages picked up by the four coastal stations were routed to Stonehaven, in north-east

Scotland, where a team of six kept a 24-hour watch. Fortunately, in recent years they have had other radio duties since the last Morse message relayed to the Coastguard was in June 1996, from a Russian passenger vessel off Aberdeen.

Alastair Taylor, the Stonehaven station manager, admits

to a certain nostalgia for Morse. "All of us here are ex-merchant or Royal Navy who used it on board ship. Morse gets through anything, whatever the radio static," he said. But very few ships still have radio officers who are capable of sending Morse. It is too expensive for the owners to train them when

there are alternatives that are easier to use.

Under a ruling of the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Morse must be replaced by the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) – using satellites – by February 1999. The United States stopped its Morse

LIFEBOAT SAVIORS

Lifeline crews around the British coast were as busy as ever this year as amateur sailors and holidaymakers ignored weather forecasts and tide tables.

Lifelines launched 5,388 times during the year and saved an average of three lives a day, according to statistics released by the Royal National Lifeline Institution (RNLI), which says that 1,248 lives were saved. In addition, 902 people at risk were "landed", and 3,224 people were "brought in" before their situation deteriorated to the point where they were at risk. Where ages were recorded, 302 call-outs involved children.

Pleasure sailors continued to account for the largest number of rescues. Pleasure craft, including wind-surfers, accounted for 3,022 of the call-outs, while people cut off by the tide or in trouble in the sea accounted for 1,165. Altogether, 4,133 leisure users were assisted and craft to the value of £37m recovered. August was the busiest month, with 1,171 launches and 296 lives saved. Nationwide, the volunteer crews spent 39,250 hours at sea, 178 in winds over Force 7 and 1,990 in darkness.

An RNLI survey showed one in five people do not check the forecast before they set sail while more than one in four ignore tide tables and charts. Yet almost half the commercial fishermen questioned and a quarter of the leisure users had been involved in a life-threatening situation at sea.

"It is rather disheartening," said an RNLI spokeswoman. "We would urge people to check the basics and take fundamental precautions before they head out."

— Stephen Goodwin

Fall in cancer deaths overshadowed by rise in number of cases

Deaths from cancer fell last year, prompting one charity to claim a 'success story'. But cases of cancer are rising sharply and the improvement in the death rate is unlikely to be sustained, writes Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor.

Better treatments, detection and screening for cancer have contributed to a fall of more than 5,000 deaths a year since the early 1990s, the Cancer Research Campaign claims today.

Figures for 1996 show 153,000 people died from the disease compared with around 158,000 in the early 1990s. A fall in deaths from lung cancer in men and from breast cancer in women account for two thirds of the reduction.

Experts from the charity expressed satisfaction at the fall but warned that it might not be maintained. Dr John Toy, director of clinical programmes, said: "Although it is too soon to say we have turned the corner these figures are very encouraging and show a new low for cancer mortality in Britain over the last 10 years. We believe a greater understanding of cancer is the reason for this success story."

However, figures published by the Office for National Statistics show that between 1979 and 1991 the number of cancer cases in England and Wales rose by 21 per cent among men and nearly 30 per cent among women. Although ageing accounted for a third of the rise in women and half of the rise in men, the rest is due to other causes.

One of the fastest-rising cancers is malignant melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, which is often caused by

excessive exposure to the sun. Prostate cancer cases have also risen rapidly and deaths from the disease are set to overtake those from bowel cancer making it Britain's second main cause of death from cancer.

On the plus side, there have been dramatic improvements in survival from childhood cancers and death rates from stomach and cervical cancer have fallen. But the Cancer Research Campaign's claim that the improvement is due to better treatment and screening is only partly true. Modern lifestyles account for most of the changes in cancer death rates – both good and bad.

The sharp fall in lung cancer deaths among men reflects the fall in smoking that began over 20 years ago. The dramatic fall in stomach cancer that began 50 years ago has accompanied the rising consumption of fresh food. Although the fall in cervical cancer deaths has accelerated in the last decade, it was already on a downward track before the national screening programme was introduced.

Where research has scored successes is in the treatment of childhood cancers, although these are rare, and in the use of tamoxifen in post-menopausal women with breast cancer, which is the most likely explanation of the fall in deaths from that disease.

A study by Cambridge University scientists published last summer suggested that on present trends the number of people affected by cancer will rise by 70 per cent in the next 20 years to 1.3 million. The disease will strike every other Briton at some point in their lives in the next generation compared with one in three people today – unless improved treatments and preventive measures can reverse the trend.

Lorry arrests spark alert over illegal immigration

Immigration officials were last night put on full alert over the New Year after three lorry loads of illegal immigrants were found to have entered the country. The Home Office has revealed that two lorries carrying up to 50 people had been stopped in Kent and Warwickshire over Christmas.

The announcement came as 16 immigrants were still being questioned after surviving sub-zero temperatures in a frozen food lorry loaded with chips. The 16 men – 15 Sri Lankans and one Bangladeshi – were hidden in gaps measuring just 18-24in between the ceiling of the lorry's refrigerated compartment and the stacks of boxes of frozen chips. They were discovered during a random search at Dover, Kent, after the lorry arrived from France last Sunday. A Home Office spokesman said the men, who had endured temperatures of -20C, would have frozen to death if they had remained in the lorry.

In the other incidents, 24 people were arrested after being seen climbing out of a lorry at Latham Trailer Park near Maidstone, Kent, on 23 December. Another 23 people – including a six-year-old – were arrested after being spotted leaving a lorry at a service station on the M40 in Warwickshire.

Radon homes need action

A national survey of homes in areas most affected by radon found that nearly one in ten required remedial action for the gas. Investigators for the government watchdog, the National Radiological Protection Board, found they had radon concentrations above the recommended action level. Naturally occurring radon is a cancer-causing agent which comes from the breakdown of uranium in the earth's crust, causing gas to seep into every home in Britain. It is only considered dangerous in high concentrations with long-term exposure.

The highest number of tests – 335,000 – was in England where 10 per cent of the homes were above the action level, the majority in Devon and Cornwall. Wales followed with 4 per cent (of 5,000 homes tested). In Scotland it was 3.5 per cent (of 6,000 homes tested), and in Northern Ireland 3.33 per cent (of 12,300 homes tested). The survey focused on "most-affected" areas where 5 per cent or more of properties were thought to have radon levels above 200 becquerels per cubic metre of air – at which remedial work is considered prudent.

Local authorities are responsible for meeting the cost of remedial work required in council houses. Private home owners may be eligible for grant aid in some instances. Modern homes with double glazing can bring about concentrations in high radon areas. But the gas can be greatly reduced through below-floor fans or other ventilation systems. Building regulations now protect new homes from radon in high-level areas.

Crime Bill gives judges more power to fight racism

New powers in the Crime and Disorder Bill to punish racism go further than many observers realise – and further than the Labour manifesto commitments. Michael Streeter, Legal Affairs Correspondent, looks at the implications of the measures.



Mike O'Brien: A clear message to racists

Judges are to be given wide power to pass tougher sentences where they believe the guilty person has "aggravated" their offence with racist behaviour. An unheralded clause in the Crime and Disorder Bill, unveiled recently, will mean a massive increase in the scope of the police, prosecutors and the judiciary to crack down on racism.

The Bill creates new offences of racially aggravated acts of violence, harassment and public order, measures which were heavily trailed and well-documented.

But Section 68, largely overlooked because of the fanfare surrounding many more high-profile features of the Bill, including measures to tackle youth crime, will allow judges to pass tougher sentences if any crime is deemed to be "racially aggravated". Unlike the new racial offences, where it is for the prosecution to prove that there were "aggravating" features, Section 68 will put the bur-

den on judges to assess any racist features and punish accordingly.

It means offences such as theft, arson and criminal damage can attract heavier sentences if there are racial overtones.

Judges will be obliged to state in court when they consider that a crime is racially aggravated and then apply it in sentencing. The extra sentence added on for racism will be proportional to its seriousness, and will push the overall sentence towards the maximum available for the existing offence.

One potential problem is if the defence challenges a judge's decision that racism did play a part, and seeks a trial within a trial on that point.

Officials had originally suggested that the test in this area should be "racially motivated"

but ministers preferred the "racially aggravated" standard, which will be much easier for prosecutors to demonstrate.

This means that if, say, towards the end of a mugging, the attacker passes a racist remark, this will be deemed an aggravating factor whereas it may have been nearly impossible to show there was racial "motivation" for the crime.

The Home Office minister responsible for Race Relations, Mike O'Brien, says the impact of the sentencing clause means that the Government is going beyond Labour's pre-election pledge to tackle racist violence and harassment.

He said: "A clear message from the Government to racists is that if they do not understand that Britain is determined to crack down on racist crime, then they will have to learn their lesson from behind bars."

It seems that one likely consequence of the anti-racism measures in the Bill will be to provide greater incentive for police forces to unearth and racist elements to a crime. Although ministers praise some forces for their anti-racism policies, they believe some others are simply going through the motions.

The Commission for Racial Equality "strongly welcomed" the sentencing clause, and the fact that the court will have to state publicly that an offence was racially aggravated. However, it feels the prosecution itself should be under a duty to raise any racial element.

e code

LIFEBOAT SAVIORS

Lifeboat crews around the British coast were so busy over the year as to save lives and holidaymakers from weather forces and sea.

The coast launched 13 times during the year and saved an average of three lives a day, according to statistics released by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), which said 1,245 lives were saved in 1992, 970 people were landed, and 1,245 people were rescued.

Before the rescue, the lifeboat crew was alerted to the danger where they were. The lifeboat was launched.

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Portrait of a judge.



Wish travel was more straightforward?

In 25 years, the number of British people going abroad has increased 800%. Foreign holidays now cause more stress than staying at home. For a step in the right direction, see p17.

US blacks swap white Christmas for merry Kwanzaa

The politically correct greeting 'Happy Holidays' supplanted 'Happy Christmas' in much of urban America this year. The change reflects the growing popularity among blacks of their winter celebration, Kwanzaa. Our correspondent reports on a new holiday – and a new controversy.

It was a bitter-cold evening in the barren downtime between Christmas and New Year, yet here, in the blighted depths of inner-city Washington, there was a steady stream of people climbing the steps into the dilapidated school building.

Inside, about 60 people were already gathered in the draughty hall. Most were young families with broods of demonstratively washed and brushed children, hushed by attentive mothers. Some of the men wore embroidered shirts, Mandela-style, and round embroidered hats.

All eyes were fixed on the platform, where a table stood laden with fresh fruit, an assembly of dried and coloured corn-cobs, a large cup, and a stand of seven candles – three of them lit. Behind the table, berobed and bewigged, stood Boba C, leaning slightly on his carved staff.

No, he told his audience, the concept of the candle-stand had not been borrowed from the Jewish menorah, Kwanzaa had its own symbols. As well as the candles – one for each day of the festival – there were also the corn ears, signifying the family and abundance, the cup, for everlasting youth, and the fruit, the "first fruits of the harvest", which is what Kwanzaa means.

"Kwanzaa," Boba C said, with mild indulgence, "is not a religious holiday, it is a cultural holiday." And Boba C, he might have added, is not a priest, but a story-teller, or "griot", whose mission is to entertain and teach. Co-opting

some young children members he launched into the tale of the ant and the giant crumb (the ant could move it to his colony only by sharing it) to illustrate the principle of collective responsibility, the third of the seven principles of Kwanzaa. Others include unity, purpose, self-determination and faith.

Kwanzaa was born of the black consciousness movement of the Sixties America. It was conceived in 1966 by a black American teacher, Maulana "Ron" Karenga, as a celebration of the African roots of black Americans – and offered a past that could, unlike slavery, be a source of pride.

The idea was that black Americans could gather as families and recognise a common

heritage in the wholeness and simplicity of a lost agricultural past. The holiday was designed to contrast both with the run-down urban surroundings in which so many American blacks live, and the brash commercialism of Christmas.

The symbols and rituals of Kwanzaa are said to derive from African harvest festivals. The gifts are supposed to be simple and home-made – food, sewn or knitted goods, jewellery from shells or beads. "You don't give loads of junk, like you do at Christmas time; give gifts that stand for something, that aren't extravagant," Boba C reminded his young audience. The food is also simple – mostly southern dishes: chicken, beans, rice and greens.

But Kwanzaa is also seen as inclusive: you can celebrate Christmas, or Hanukkah, or Ramadan as well. The trend among some younger black parents who grew up in the aftermath of the civil rights movement seems to be towards rejecting Christmas and celebrating Kwanzaa instead, starting in a low-key way on 26 December and ending with a big family feast on New Year's Day.

That Kwanzaa is so new has laid it open to charges of artificiality. After slow beginnings, however, it has been growing apace. The number of people celebrating Kwanzaa is reported to have grown by a million a year in the past five years, to reach around 20 million – the vast majority in the United States.

In the mid-Nineties, it seems to have tapped into two changes in social mood: among blacks, the growing feeling that the civil rights movement had run into the sand and that self-reliance might be the best alternative; and among whites the increasing acceptance of cultural diversity.

This has brought a giant Hanukkah menorah on to the ellipse in front of the White House alongside the national Christmas tree in the US capital. It has also brought Kwanzaa festivities to the Smithsonian Institution.

This growth in Kwanzaa's popularity and liberal encouragement for a black American festival has brought dilemmas. American commerce has been doing its bit to promote Kwanzaa. Finding a Christmas – as opposed to holiday – card in Washington this year may have been hard, but there were Kwanzaa cards aplenty, and commercially produced Kwanzaa goods, food and presents.

That a festival devised as a reaction to the commercialism of Christmas was rapidly being captured by the same commercialism has riled some blacks and elicited a protest from the main black business organisation in the US. The Washington-based International Black Buyers' and Manufacturers' Expo and Conference accused big producers of being "arrogantly exploitative of the culture of African people" and called on blacks not to buy Kwanzaa goods from non-black owned companies.



Winter harvest: Kwanzaa celebrations in the SOB Club in New York. The festival was born of the Sixties black consciousness movement, offering a past that could be a recognition of a common heritage and rejection of commercialism. Photograph: Frank Spooner Pictures

BY MARY DEJEVSKY

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Iran's puritanical censors tear classic novels to pieces

While President Khatami's government promises intellectual freedom in Iran, James Joyce's *Ulysses* remains banned and other classics appear only in mangled form. Robert Fisk in Tehran meets a woman publisher struggling with the censors to bring literature to the people.

The greater the frustration in Shahla Lahigi's voice, the higher the decibels in her words. "When we ask why they have not kept their promise to the people, it seems they are scared. But they do not tell us who they are scared of. So we call it the 'fear of shadows'."

Behind Mrs Lahigi is a bookshelf containing hundreds of volumes which she has published, or vainly tried to print, in the Persian language. Several of the books lie within the "shadows" so feared by the government. Twenty-eight of them are banned, including Joyce's *Ulysses*.

"All of Milan Kundera's books are banned," Mrs Lahigi says. "And I have just been asked, by the new Guidance Ministry people, to delete 54 pages from a book of Gabriel

Garcia Marquez's short stories. This happened just last week: there was a story about a grandmother who uses her granddaughter for prostitution."

"Now the government has censored 14 different passages from Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*. I'm still trying to publish it in some form. Even with deletions, it's better than nothing."

Is it? Under Iranian law, publishers are not permitted to show where sections of books have been erased. Esquivel might be published but, Mrs Lahigi admits, in a bastardised version which gives no hint of the literary surgery which has taken place. The same applies to Marquez. Iranian students would be given no indication that his work has been mangled.

Mrs Lahigi's frustration is replaced by cynicism. "In a publishers' conference recently, we were joking that if we put *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in to the censor, he'd leave us with only ten years of solitude to publish!"

Mrs Lahigi is fighting the forces of reaction as well as fear. "We have a woman who wrote a novel in Persian. It was about two women during the [Iran-Iraq] war, one in Paris, one in Tehran – the book is in the form of letters written to each other. The woman in Tehran wants to leave and get away from the aerial bombing.



Censored: Writers Milan Kundera (left) Laura Esquivel and Gabriel Garcia Marquez



The woman in Paris is safe but wants to be in Tehran with her family and friends. The government banned the book in Persian but when I asked for permission to publish it in English, they gave permission."

"I also wanted to publish a book about women in 17th century novels by an American writer called Linda Miles. And what did they say? They said it was 'too feminist'."

Nor is that the only problem Mrs Lahigi has encountered. She wanted to publish a book about women's rights in the time of the Prophet Mohamed. "It was written by an Iranian mullah and the mullah was a *mujtahid* – a very intellectual man. He wrote that there is no problem about men and women being together and said the *hijab* (Islamic covering for women) does not come from Is-

lam. I could not get permission to publish this book. They said 'absolutely impossible'."

"They", for which read the Islamic Guidance Ministry, or *Eshad* in Persian, clearly read the books sent to them for censorship. The Persian novel about the two women, for example, almost certainly fell foul of the ministry because it included a reference to a family bribing Revolutionary Guards (who are always on the watch for 'loose living') not to break up a party in Tehran. Allowing a book to be published in a foreign language might prevent the 'contamination' of the uneducated.

Mrs Lahigi herself was the first of Iran's 130 women publishers – there are in all 1,800 publishers – and in the past 11 years, Iran's most famous authors have been women. "All

our commercial books which are bestsellers are written by women," Mrs Lahigi says. "Our women have become very successful film directors – how many women are directors in Hollywood? Over the past 10 years, 60 per cent of our translators were women. We even have a woman bus-driver."

"I knew President Khatami when he ran the *Eshad* ministry and he was good and he came to our publisher's exhibition and told me 'I came early today – just to talk to you.' After his election, we thought we could hold our heads up again – because we had a very hard time after the revolution. We had become ashamed of being women. We expect Khatami to change the civil law (which discriminates against women) – but so far he has done nothing."

Chinese TV breaks taboo to put sex on small screen

Chinese television is testing the limits of what its propaganda masters will allow. Teresa Poole, in Peking, says today's viewer can find much more than glowing despatches from the latest tractor collective.

The camera had been hidden in a shoulder bag as the television reporter wandered into a barber's shop at 3pm, and the grainy footage clearly showed a young Chinese woman in a long black and white diamond-patterned dress greeting him at the door. "Massage 80 yuan (£7.50)," she smiled. "Is that one hour?" asked the fearless investigative journalist. "Yes, do you want one?"

"How about the tips?" "Depends on the places I massage you."

Prostitution is thriving in China, but it is not normally featured on mid-morning television. So when *Peking Express*, one of a new brand of Chinese current affairs and consumer shows, recently set about exposing the city's undercover sex trade, it took a careful path.

The subject matter was easy enough to find. As the hidden camera was led into a small curtained-off room at the back of yet another Peking barber's shop, the girl said she could offer a "special service" for 300 yuan (£23). Looking about 18 years old, she said: "Do a busi-

ness of 300 yuan with little sister... do little sister a favour."

Sympathy was not high on the agenda from the television programme, however. "Those playing with fire will be burned," said the concluding censorious commentary. "The Public Security Bureau will intensify its strike against this ugly behaviour."

Mainstream television news in China is still under the firm control of the propaganda bosses, but a handful of current

affairs shows now offer more ambitious fare. *Peking Express*, a 20-minute programme started by Peking Television in 1995, produces four editions a week, each of which usually airs three times a day. The audience is big – up to 2 million. A telephone hotline allows viewers to phone in with complaints that need investigating, including tales of bureaucratic intransigence.

The mix of subjects would seem bizarre to a British television audience. The prostitution report was sandwiched between a survey on the causes of stress (inadequate social welfare and increasing income gap) and warnings about small, private watch-repair stalls which rip off customers.

Championing the consumer and exposing shoddy goods allows the programme greater leeway than one might expect, given that the media is still one of the tightest government-controlled sectors.

Everyone knows there is a limit beyond which it would be professional suicide to venture. "There are some subjects which we want to make programmes about, but are not al-

lowed," said Niu Zhengqing, 25, a reporter on *Peking Express*. No programme could investigate Peking's biggest corruption scandal, which saw the toppling of the city's party chief.

Du Xin, the deputy director of the Peking Television department which makes *Peking Express*, said: "No matter what programme you are making, you'd better get the support of the relevant government department first."

So when the *Peking Express* journalists came back with hours of footage about city prostitution, the programme contacted the Peking Industrial and Commercial Bureau and the Public Security Bureau and made a return visit to the karaoke bars with the police.

The girls and women were shown being arrested and questioned in prurient detail. The programme never asked why women from the provinces find themselves as "hostesses", the cameraman paid scant attention to the male clientele, did not reveal who owned the clubs, and did not ask why all this prostitution has been going on relatively openly under the noses of the police.

One punter, caught quite literally with his pants down, was led away quickly, while the camera zoomed in on his female companion.

If there is one rule which television programmes know well, it is not to risk stepping on important toes. And these days in China, who knows which official one might find in a darkened room in a karaoke bar.

State branch of Communist movement, at
Washington, D.C. 20001

[illegible]

Time is precious. When the Gregorian calendar was introduced in 1752, mobs rioted in the streets because they thought their lives had been shortened by 11 days. You probably know how they feel.

A New Year's fling with tartan



Left: jacket, £375, by Christian Lacroix Bazar; red and black tartan sheer top, £85, by Jean Paul Gaultier, both from Harvey Nichols, Knightsbridge, London, SW1 (0171-235 5000); Fifties earrings, £45, from Steinberg & Tolkein, 193 King's Road, London SW3 (0171-376 3660); dragon brooch, made to order by Vivienne Westwood Gold Label, 6 Davies Street, London W1 (0171-629 3757)

Check it out, Sassenachs. Vivienne Westwood is not the only one south of the Border to be wild about tartan. Tamsin Blanchard reports. Photographs by Sheridan Morley.

When the MacAndreas tartan was given recognition by the official museum in Lochcarron in 1993, it was a fine day for Vivienne Westwood. Since the early days of punk and bondage trousers, she had made use of tartans, and now she had one of her very own, to safety-pin, lace up into corsetry or ruche into bustles, just as she liked. Westwood herself was born in Glossop, Derbyshire, but it somehow seems fitting that she should have her own tartan, however remote her Scottish roots.

Since her Anglomania collection of autumn/winter 1993, when Westwood loaded her models so heavily with tartans that Naomi Campbell fell off her platform shoes, the designer has introduced a new tartan each season. This winter, there are two: the McStone, and the McBrick - featured here, and so named because of its colour, McBrick red. The MacAndreas was named after Vivienne's husband and collaborator, Andreas Kronthaler. Originally, the tartan plaid was a blanket worn by Scotsmen by pleating it into a belt and wrapping the excess fabric around the shoulders, a little like a sari. The British banned

the wearing of tartan as a political offence in 1746, but repealed the law in 1785. Ironically, it was Queen Victoria who popularised it in the 19th century and made it a wardrobe staple, when she introduced a tartan for her sons to wear on holiday in Balmoral.

The look quickly caught on, and children in particular would wear tartan kilts, dresses and knickerbockers as part of their "Sunday best". Tartan has become synonymous with royalty, as it has with Scotland, and, what's more, it never goes out of fashion. It represents both the Establishment and - when Westwood and Malcolm McLaren got their hands on the stuff in the Seventies - anarchy too.

And of course, the rest of the world, particularly the French, Italians, Japanese and Americans (who think tartan comes from the mighty clan of Ralph Lauren) perhaps love it even more than we do. Just as the Japanese will buy traditional tartans and Burberry checks by the bus load, so, too, will they spend almost £1,000 on a tailored suit made of officially recognised Westwood tartan.

The traditional kilt must be one of fashion's most enduring classics. This winter, it has been revived by the designers Clements Ribeiro, whose mini-kilts and tartan dresses decorated with lace have a certain Bohemian eccentricity about them. Christian Lacroix, French designer and fan of all things British, is inspired by traditional fabrics; he takes

tartans and loosens them up a little to make abstract weaves.

The bad boy of French fashion, Jean Paul Gaultier, not only wears a kilt to show off his rugged Gallic knees; he uses tartan in his collections, too. Queen Victoria would not have been amused, however, by a sheer T-shirt - whatever the shade of tartan.

And it is not just the jet-set fashion world that pillages Scotland's finest weaves; the Scottish knitwear company Barrie has seen the potential in its own back yard and has produced some luxurious cashmere tartan knits, perfect for throwing over your shoulders when venturing into the cold night air for a chorus of "Auld Lang Syne".

According to Ms Westwood, the appeal of tartan is "heroic, rustic and traditional and because of this, romantic: it has a sense of dressing-up, even fancy dress, and lends itself to role-playing, perfect for coquetry." In other words, for tonight's New Year celebrations it is just the thing: far grander and more dignified than any little black dress, and guaranteed to give the wearer - male or female - a wild and swinging night. Happy hogmanay.

Stylist: Charlie Harrington
Model: Clare Durkin at Models 1
Make-up: Alex Babsky at Mandy Coakley
Hair: Esther Bihore for MacMillan, 61-63, Monmouth Street, London WC2

(All prices are pre-sale)



Button-back, McBrick tartan butterfly jacket, £650; matching beetle skirt, £235; both by Vivienne Westwood Red label, 44 Conduit Street, London W1 (enquiries, 0171-439 1109); green leather gloves, made to order, by Vivienne Westwood Gold label, as before; brooch, £300, from Steinberg & Tolkein, as before



Chiffon tartan top with neck scarf, £198 and matching wool trousers, £211, both by Clements Ribeiro, from Liberty, Regent Street, London W1 (0171-409 7719); cashmere tartan rose cardigan, £285, from the Scotch House, 2 Brompton Road, London, SW1 (mail order, 0171-581 2151); suede ankle boots, £375, from Gina, 189 Sloane Street, London SW1 (0171-235 2932)



Silk vest, to order; matching briefs in box of three, £89, both by Burberrys, 18-22 Haymarket, London SW1 (enquiries, 0171-734 5929); black lace suspender belt, £129, by Christian Dior, from a selection at Harrods, Knightsbridge, London SW1 (enquiries, 0171-225 5661); choker, from Steinberg & Tolkein, as before

BUY ME

SEQUINED BAG BY MORGAN

£19.99

If you have recently visited the section in Selfridges devoted to Prada's younger sister line, the party girl Miu Miu, you'll be aware of the mini-whirlwind frenzy over the most sought-after accessory of the season: the little sequined handbag. It is the sort of thing you used to hanker after as a child because it is so bright and sparkly. The only drawback, as usual, is the price - more than £100 - and the fact that every fashion victim in town has bought up almost the entire stock of the glittery little blighters already.

By far the best alternative is the £19.99 version from Morgan. Available in bright pink, silver, gold and black, it's the perfect size for a bit of lip-pie, a small purse and, of

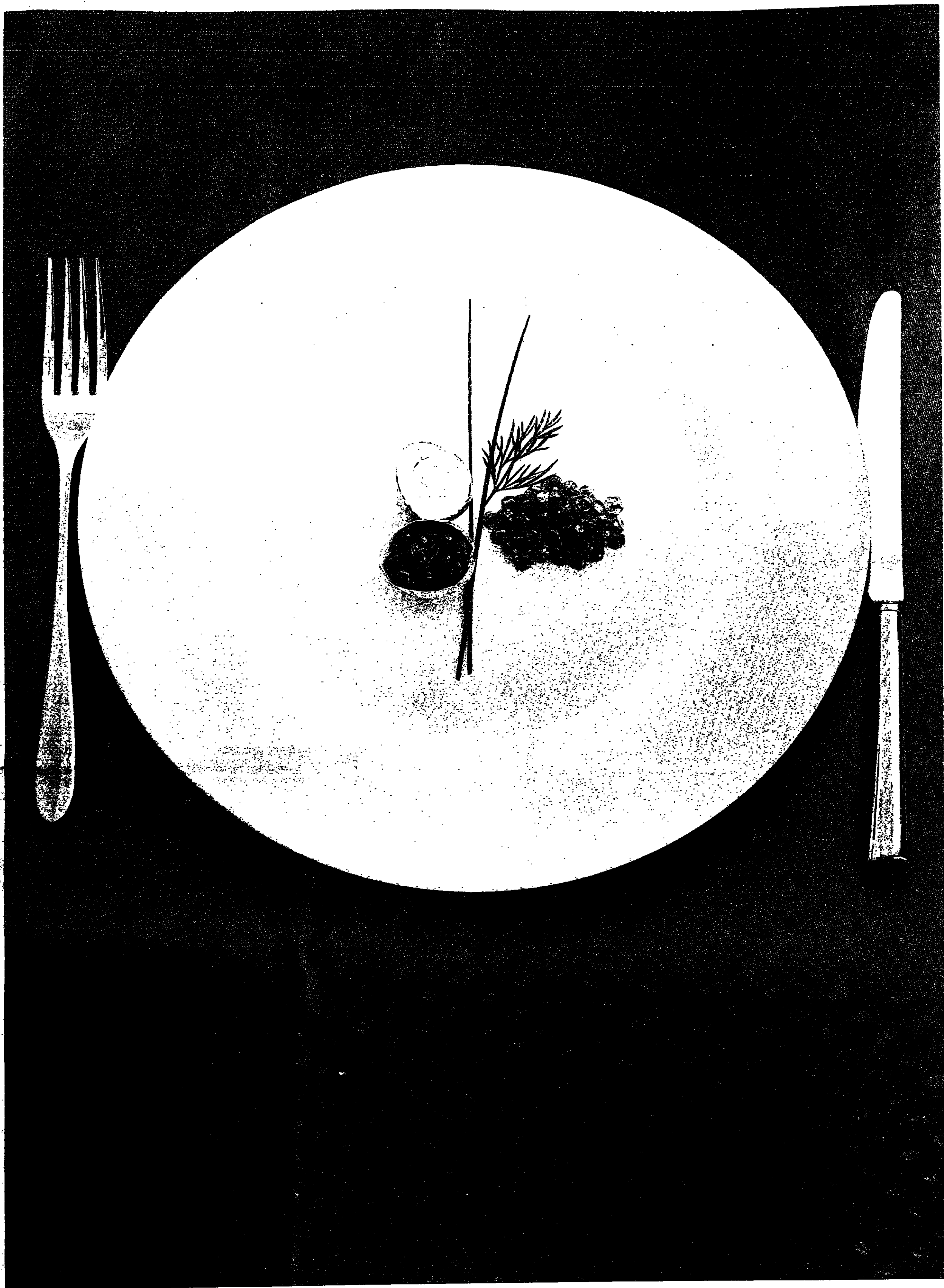
course, the essential toothbrush: a great companion for a fabulous New Year's Eve party. And you'll have some money left over for a few drinks and a taxi home.

Available from Morgan, 393 Oxford Street, London W1 and branches nationwide (enquiries, 0171-499 4101). Sale starts today, with reductions of up to one-third.

Holly Davies



صحننا من الامل



Wish you could have a bit more?

Due to the many ingenious forms of taxation, the average person only ever sees around 64% of the money they actually earn.
If only your hard earned money could work a bit harder.



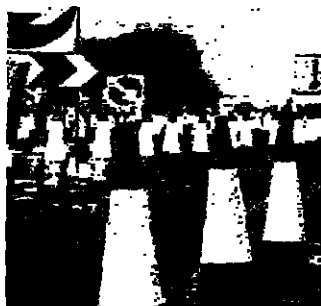
Wish life was fairer?

Scientific tests prove that bread and jam really does fall jam side down more often than not. Life is therefore cosmically unfair and you should be more careful where you put your bread.



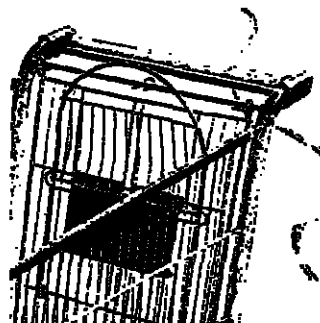
Plain English. Confused? You won't be. All Abbey National branches have jargon-free guides to explain our products and services. If you need more detail we have cleanly-laid out leaflets, containing application forms and the small print, which we've made simpler (and a bit bigger).

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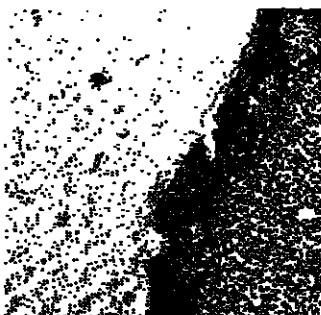
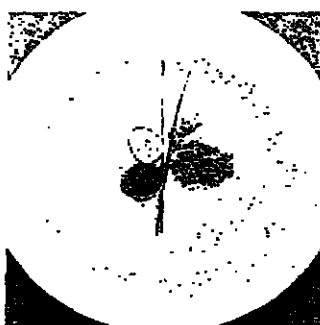
Mortgages. If a jumper is tight you can take it off. But a mortgage is a long term commitment and needs to be as comfortable as possible. That's why we offer a wide range of mortgage options and have experienced mortgage advisors to find the right thing for you. You can also get a swift decision in principle over the phone.

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New words: Wysiwyg is short for 'What you see is what you get.' Quagma is hypothetical matter consisting of free quarks and gluons. Whereas Zift is simply a zygotic intra-fallopian transfer. So that's clear then.
YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT.
To assist in improving our service, we may record or monitor telephone calls. The Abbey National Bank Account is subject to status. The amount required to qualify for the double interest bonus is subject to change. Multifunction cards and overdrafts are only available to Abbey National Bank Account customers, subject to status and are not available to persons under the age of 18. Authorised overdraft APR of 13.9% is variable. Telephone banking is only available to Abbey National Bank Account and Instant Plus Account customers who have a Multifunction, Election or Abbeylink Card. Overdrafts are repayable at any time in accordance with our Personal Banking Conditions. Secured loans and mortgages require a charge on your property and in the case of endowment mortgages an endowment life policy for the amount of the advance and a charge over the policy. All loans are subject to status and secured loans are also subject to valuation. Loans are not available to persons under the age of 18. Written quotations available on request. Sterling travellers cheques will be credited to your account free of charge and for currency and non sterling travellers cheques there is a £2 handling fee. Abbey National Travel Insurance is underwritten by Home and Overseas Ltd. Abbey National plc has undertaken to comply with the Association of British Insurers Code of Practice for selling General Insurance and is designated as a company agent for which the companies it represents accept responsibility. A copy of the Code is available on request. Abbey National plc, which is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority, only sells its own life assurance, pension and unit trust products. Abbey National, the Umbrella Couple symbol and 'Because life's complicated enough' are trademarks of Abbey National plc.

POLITICS

Teachers join ranks of the great and the good in the 'people's honours'

Teachers are rewarded today with knighthoods - "sirs for sirs" - in the first "people's New Year's Honours List" since Tony Blair came to power.

Peter Clark, the headmaster who was sent in to the Ridings school in Halifax, West Yorkshire, after inspectors said it was failing, is rewarded for his efforts by becoming a Commander of the British Empire.

He is one of 58 teachers or others connected with education honoured as part of the Prime Minister's election commitment to raise standards in education. Next year's Honours List will reward doctors and nurses to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the National Health Service.

Knighthoods are awarded to three state school head teachers for their work in rescuing failing schools or raising standards: Leslie Hampton, head of Northcote School, Wolverhampton, becomes a knight; Patricia Collarbone, past head of Haggerston secondary school for girls in Hackney, and Tamsyn Unison, head of Hampstead School, Camden, become dames.

Sir Ron Dearing, chairman of the national committee of inquiry into higher education, is one of four new life peers. The others are Sir Robin Butler, cabinet secretary; Paul Hamlyn, the pub-

lisher and Labour backer, and the Rt Rev David Sheppard, past bishop of Liverpool.

The prime minister's official spokesman joked about the list being dubbed the people's honours - "they are all people; there are no Martians in the list". But Mr Blair has been keen to ensure the continued support for the honours list system by rewarding more people for achievement in ordinary walks of life.

In addition to the knighthood for Elton John, the awards carry a special section for those involved in planning the funeral of Diana, Princess of Wales, including warrant officer Paul

Cundiffe of the first battalion, Welsh Guards, one of the pallbearers. Sir Robert Fellowes, the Queen's private secretary is made a CGB.

Marking the peace process in Northern Ireland, Sir John Chilcot, the past permanent secretary at the Northern Ireland office, is made a CGB. Peter North, who reported on reforms to stop violence on Ulster marches, is made a knight, and David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, is made a privy councillor to enable him to be briefed on intelligence secrets. But casting the honours more widely, means fewer gongs for diplomats who expected them on



Chris Patten: Is made a Companion of Honour

"Buggins turn" in the past, Chris Patten, former Governor of Hong Kong, and Eric Hobsbawm, the historian, are made companions of honour. The campaigner against apartheid, Archbishop Trevor Huddleston, is awarded the KCMG.

— Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent

BUSINESS

CBE for inventor whose new design cleaned up

The inventor of the bag-less vacuum cleaner, James Dyson, whose revolutionary "cyclone" design ousted giants Hoover and Electrolux from the top of the British market, has been rewarded with a CBE.

Mr Dyson, 50, who is reputed to be worth more than £100m through earnings from his company, Dyson Appliances, said he was "delighted" to see industrial design recognised. "I'm not really what an inventor is. I'm really just an engineer who manufactures his own products," he said.

Launched in 1993, the Dyson vacuum cleaner was the first to dispense with costly and ineffi-

cient dust bags. Mr Dyson spent 14 years developing the idea and now employs 1,000 staff in Wiltshire. Dysons accounts for more than a third of all vacuum cleaners sold in Britain.

Other awards to industry and City leaders emphasised Labour's much trumpeted new relationship with the business community. They include a knighthood for Neville Stimson, chief executive of construction giant Tarmac and a prominent Conservative supporter.

Apart from his job at Tarmac, which included a leading role in the building of the Channel Tunnel, Sir Neville is a member of the Court of the

Bank of England. He said: "Regardless of my own political persuasion, the Government is proving that the old left versus right divide is irrelevant."

Knighthoods also go to Dennis Stevenson, chairman of Pearson, the media group which publishes the *Financial Times*, which backed Labour at the last two elections. Sir Dennis was the whistle-blower in one of the big City scandals of the 1980s, the Blue Arrow affair.

The former Pearson managing director, Frank Barlow, has also been given a knighthood, for "services to the newspaper industry".

— Chris Godsmark

THE PRIME MINISTER'S LIST

LIFE PEERS
Butler, Sir Frederick Edward Robin Butler, GCB, CVO. Secretary of the Cabinet and head of the Home Civil Service.
Dearing, Sir Ronald Ernest, CBE. Chairman, National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education.
Hamlyn, Paul Bertrand, CBE. Publisher.
Sheppard, The Right Rev David Stuart, lately Bishop of Liverpool.

PRIVY COUNCILLORS
Trimble, William David, MP. Member of Parliament for Upper Bann and Leader, Ulster Unionist Party.

COMPANIONS OF HONOUR
Hobsbawm, Professor Eric John Emerit, Emeritus Professor of Economic and Social History, London University. For services to history.
Patten, The Right Honourable Christopher Francis, former Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Hong Kong. For public service.

KNIGHTS BACHELOR
Arbuthnot, Professor John Peebles, Principal, University of Strathclyde. For services to higher education.
Badger, Peter Gilmore Noto, lately Chief Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate.
Barlow, Frank, CBE. For services to the Newspaper Industry.
Bennett, Richard Rodney, CBE. Composer. For services to music.

Berridge, Professor Michael John, FRSE, Head, Laboratory of Molecular Signalling, Babraham Institute. For services to science.
Broers, Professor Alice Nigel, FRSE. For services to Engineering Education.
Bull, George Jeffrey, Chairman, Grand Metropolitan plc. For services to the Alcoholics Anonymous.

Carter, John Gordon Thomas, CBE, Chief, ceece, Commercial Union Group and cmm, Association of British Insurers. For services to the Insurance Industry.
Cusick, Professor Alfred, Professor of Surgery, University of Dundee. For services to Minimal Access Surgery.
Finney, Thomas, OBE. For services to Association Football.

Frost, Terence Ernest Manliffe, Painter. For services to Art and to Education.
Gambon, Michael John, CBE. Actor. For services to Drama.
Hampton, Leslie Geoffrey, Head Teacher, Northcote School, Wolverhampton. For services to Education.

Haves, Brian, CBE, OPM, Deputy Commissioner, Metropolitan Police. For services to the Police.
Hearne, Graham James, CBE, Chairman, Enterprise Oil. For services to the Oil Industry.
John, Elton Hercules, CBE, Musician and Composer. For services to music and for charitable work.

North, Peter Machin, CBE, QC, Principal, Jesus College, Oxford. For Public Service and for services to the Church of England.

Myers, Professor Norman, For services to the Environment. Smith, Robert Daglish, Executive dir, UK Committee for UNICEF. For services to UNICEF.

ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE
Knight Grand Cross (GCB) Rothchild, Nathaniel Charles Jacob, Baron, For services to the Arts and to Heritage.
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Imison, Mrs. Tamsyn, Head Teacher, Hampstead School, Camden, London. For services to Education.
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Martin, Ronald Noel, for public service.
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Winkler, Charles Boniface, Clerk of Committees, House of Commons.

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Male, Anthony Hubert, For services to the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges.

Myers, Professor Norman, For services to the Environment. Smith, Robert Daglish, Executive dir, UK Committee for UNICEF. For services to UNICEF.

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Lynda Roberts, MBE, with Josie Russell, whom she helped recover from the murder of her mother and sister

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summer. Jenny Pitman, twice a Grand National-winning trainer; the 1984 Olympic javelin gold medalist Tessa Sanderson; Jennifer Cardwell, former manager of the Great Britain women's hockey team; and Vivien Saunders, first chairman of the Women's Professional Golf Association.

[illegible]

How I learnt to move on by going backwards

RESOLUTIONS

Rachel Cusk felt trapped by the interminable misery of boarding school, even after she left. But then she learned how to play a trick on time ...

I wonder whether it is true, as I sometimes feel, that the early part of life assumes more significance the further away from it you are: that rather as the roots of a tree extend to support its growing weight, the vessel of childhood and adolescence is not, as we might think, discarded, but enlarged to contain the volume of years.

It is not that I resent the way time orders experiences, or that the period when someone is most powerless should retrospectively hold the most interest.

My sense of an injustice, or at least a deception, lies rather in the youthful belief that the future is superabundant and universal, and will absolve us of the parochialness of childhood. To find that life is ultimately parochial, that it comes back again and again to the place where it began, fills me with unease. I have no sense of a story yet, no faith in an ending that will justify its beginning. Increasingly I believe that you can spend only what you have, and that if you spend unwisely at first it is simply because no one has taught you about prudence and pain.

I misspent my youth, although not in the traditional way. When I was 12 I was sent to boarding school, for an internment so lengthy in proportion to my age that the prospect of release lay philosophically beyond my reach. I had always disliked school, mainly because it encouraged counting. From an early age I became aware that imposing enforceable limits on time interfered with one's natural relationship to it. Since birth I had suffered from asthma, itself an illness of time, an aversion to the military march of breath and hours. Boarding school presented a challenge even to my understanding of the arithmetic of routine. Instead of days there were terms, periods of submersion too long humanly to be withstood. Some other method of survival would have to be evolved, some air pocket found where the weeks could safely be waited out.

This evolution might, of course, have occurred naturally. Initially unhappy, I might have changed and become someone who liked boarding school; but it seemed to me even then that those sorts of changes were dangerous, that they represented some form of surrender. Instead I stuck by my unhappiness. It was a private resource, indeed my only privacy. It became the place where time could pass by without its shadow falling on me,

where life could be felt despite every attempt to make it unfeeling.

For a long time afterwards I thought that the way to remember those six years was to honour their detail, their nights and days, their violence, their loneliness, the faces and words and feelings that populated them. I thought the time they represented, like a paper bond, could be reclaimed; that by living every new hour with the awareness of liberty, the site of pain would yield some strange pleasure, like a tender scar over which longing fingers can finally run. But the futility of this pleasure, like the fact that there was a scar at all, became enraging. The detail, rather than justifying the expense of years, evinced their waste. Life, I realised, had gone on, had been spent. The fact that I hadn't wanted it did not mean it could be refunded. I had been waiting for a better time, but when it came I found that I did not step from a cocoon of repressed desire to receive it. What had shielded me could not be cast away. The impermeability of my skin repelled good and bad alike. I waited out happiness, and anticipated its end, just as I had done misery.

These equations seem, and are, simple, but the purpose of reciting them here is to question the greater science to which they belong. We all feel ourselves to be the servants, if not the victims, of chronology and time, and don't know when or where along this merciless trajectory we will find the core of our being, the spool of significance around which the thread of years will wrap itself. My sense that this significance had come too early for me, had snagged me and disordered the whole weave of my future, left me in a kind of moral opposition to the notions of order that seemed to underpin experience. I still wonder whether the only function of personality is to bear witness to the brutality of its formation, to tell the story of how you came to be by enacting the process of your creation; and how by implication one part of time could be so much more important than another. I wonder why the development of self-will is accompanied by an inability to change, and whether the injustice of unhappiness is real or illusory. I rail at the idea that having endured the bad, I could find myself unfit for the good. Most of all I wonder whether people are no more than the sum of the things that have happened to them, like a "before and after" advertisement, except in reverse.

When I left school, the intimate relationship with time I had formed permitted it a troubling, guilty tenancy in my mind, although in fact I had earned my freedom from it. I took to smoking, the original pause for thought, as a form of privacy, a way

of obscuring time's presence. The limited languor, the empty parentheses of a cigarette still hold a great attraction for me. Writing fiction later became a similar way of living outside time, a feat of inversion: the creation over time of a place in which time has no power. Given that this was precisely the reverse of what had happened during my years at school, I could have been eternally satisfied by the neatness of my own existence, and the good order I could these days show myself to be in. In fact I derived something better from it, something which, if not actually an answer, at least holds some hope of becoming one.

The question, in any case, was this: why does the order in which things

happen act as an index on their importance? I mean this in the sense of the capacity to feel. It seemed to me an unanswerable injustice, a victory of matter over mind, that the store of human spirit should diminish; that having cared about one thing, I could now only care about another in a way that surrendered its definition to the first. It's the thing people always say about first loves, and I never believed that either.

What struck me, finally, was that the decision to see time as going only one way is a personal decision, made through weariness, or fear, or perhaps even contentment. It struck me that by seeing life as going backwards I had a far greater chance of making some

sense of myself. This is what fiction tries to do, to tell a story in the knowledge of its ending, and thus accord to all the parts of life their proper value.

I still occasionally visit myself in the dungeon of a dark, friendless school night, and I breathe and I wait, and I can feel in that waiting some unknown purpose, some secret sense of a better place; and I am not ruined, or elsewhere, but the same, furnishing that anticipation to the beat of an inaudible pulse.

Tomorrow: 1992 - the year David Aaronovitch realised he was climbing the wrong greasy pole



BELOVED AND BONK Diary of a divorce

It started when the much-awaited decree absolute arrived a little early. I had planned to be in my best frock, with washed hair and half a day of starvation under a tightened belt. Instead it found me with biscuit-stuffing PMT, in dirty jeans, sitting at my desk wondering whether I'd picked up nits from the kids again. So that when I ran to tell the glad tidings to my new Very Nice Chap, I had oatmeal stuck to my teeth, an attack of the does-my-bum-look-big's and a Serengeti of wildlife on my head. A celebratory snog seemed out of the question.

I was still suffering from having received great news whilst looking terminally ugly when we dropped VNC off at the station. I was so busy thinking about how hideously revolting I was, and how all the presents I'd bought were disastrous, that I managed to say goodbye to him as though he were a Tesco's receipt. And all the way home in the car I knew that by the time he reached York he would be completely over me, and in love with someone beautiful in the next seat. And that it would be my fault. Again.

Then the children revolted about the messiness of our Christmas arrangements. Two days here, two days there, a week with Beloved. Arrangements that a month ago they found unbearably wonderful and exciting were now so objectionable to them that they swore they didn't want to be with their cousins, they didn't want to see Granny and they didn't want to see their dad. All they wanted was to cling to my legs all Christmas and New Year and be fed chocolate and presents until they fell asleep. And they demonstrated their love for me by fighting, throwing things and having to be sent upstairs.

Then in the afternoon we got lost on the way back from dropping the dog off at the kennels (very traumatic: "Why are you leaving me in this awful place? Are you ever coming back?") We entered some Alain Fournier domain where the lanes changed shape and direction and there weren't any road signs. And as I frantically did three-point turns in muddy cartways, spraying liquid clay all over the wind-screens with my madly spinning wheels, the radio played a selection of tunes for the Recently Divorced and the Soon-To-Be-Dumped-For-Being-Ugly. At least my snarling and whimpering by turns made the kids shut up.

And when I got home to cram presents, mountains of laundered clothes and children into the car to escape to my sister's for Christmas Day, I found that the sofa-delivery people had been. And my new sofa is much bigger than I expected, so asking them to put it on the landing upstairs wasn't a great idea. You need mountaineering equipment now to get between bathroom and bedrooms, and nothing, this side of the San Andreas Fault going live, will shift it.

Climbing over that sofa for the fifth time, ferrying fish tanks, wall-sized posters of waterlilies and egg incubators (presents, OK - I know my family aren't normal) down to the car, I felt very negative indeed. What happy ending could possibly be in store for a person like me, I thought. How does any handsome prince get a sofa bed, two quarrelling children and a bum the size of Mount Rushmore on to the back of his white charger, or even into the boot of his red Triumph? It's just not possible. He's probably snogging the leggy blonde backpacker from Adelaide already.

So that was Christmas Eve. Can't say I remember a great deal of Christmas Day. I know Donner and Blitzen came bursting through the front doors of the wood-burning stove as planned, because seeing Buster and Bunny up to their arms in woolly counting socks was the last image on my retina before I started putting chablis on my cornflakes. I drank on Christmas Day, shamelessly and with great purpose, to drown out the year and all my sins and failings with it; my failure to keep husbands, believe in Happy Endings, and get sofas in the right place.

And that, dear readers, was the consequence of having Christmas on day twenty-two-eight. And if you don't understand, boys, get a girl, without PMT, to explain. All right?

Stevie Morgan

LONDON CINEMAS

(today's showings only - please confirm times with venues)

ABC BAKER STREET (0171-935 9772)
• Baker St Home Alone 3 1.15pm, 3.30pm, 5.50pm
• The Tango Lesson 1.25pm, 3.40pm, 6.15pm

ABC PANTON STREET (0171-930 0631)
• Pic Circ The Game 2.20pm, 5.20pm
• L.A. Confidential 2pm, 5pm Mrs Brown 1.20pm, 3.40pm Wilde 1.10pm, 3.30pm

ABC PICCADILLY (0171-437 3561) • Pic Circ
Chasing Amy 1.15pm, 3.25pm, 5.55pm
G.I. 1.40pm, 5.40pm

ABC SHAFTESBURY AVENUE
(0171-836 6279) • Pic Circ
Chasing Amy 2.15pm Wilde 1.05pm, 3.30pm

ABC SWISS CENTRE (0171-439 4470)
• Pic Circ L'Appartement 1.10pm, 3.40pm, 6.10pm
• Lawn Dogs 1.10pm, 3.30pm, 6.20pm
• Marius Et Jeannette 1pm, 3.15pm, 6pm
• Ma Vie En Rose 1.10pm, 3.10pm, 5.10pm, 7.10pm

ABC TOTTENHAM COURT ROAD
(0171-636 6148) • Pic Circ
The Movie 1.15pm, 3.25pm, 5.35pm, 7.45pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 1.10pm, 3.50pm, 6.30pm
Welcome To Sarajevo 1.35pm, 4.05pm, 7pm

BARBICAN CINEMA (0171-382 7000)
• Pic Circ The Borrowers 2.30pm
• Spiceworld - The Movie 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.30pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 3pm, 6pm, 8.40pm

CHELSEA CINEMA (0171-351 3742)
• Pic Circ
The Tango Lesson 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm

CLAPHAM PICTURE HOUSE
(0171-498 2242) • Pic Circ
The Borrowers 1pm, 3pm, 5pm
The Full Monty 1.30pm, 3.30pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 1.45pm, 4.15pm

CURZON MAYFAIR (0171-369 1720)
• Pic Circ
Tomorrow Never Dies 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm

CURZON PHOENIX (0171-369 1721)
• Pic Circ
Keep The Aspidochelone Flying 1.15pm, 6.15pm
Shooting Fish 3.45pm

CURZON WEST END (0171-439 4805)
• Pic Circ
The Full Monty 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm
It's A Wonderful Life 2.40pm, 5.30pm

ELEPHANT & CASTLE CORONET
(0171-703 4968) • Pic Circ
Elephant & Castle
Alien: Resurrection 8.40pm
The Borrowers 1pm, 4.50pm
George Of The Jungle 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.50pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 2.45pm, 6.40pm, 8.50pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 3pm, 4.30pm, 8.25pm

EMPIRE LEICESTER SQ (0171-437 1234)
• Pic Circ
The Full Monty 1pm, 3.30pm, 6pm
Seven Years In Tibet 12noon, 3pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 11.30am, 1.50pm, 4.15pm, 6.40pm

GATE NOTTING HILL (0171-727 4043)
• Pic Circ
Notting Hill Gate
Kitchen 1.55pm, 4.15pm, 6.35pm

HAMMERSMITH VIRGIN (0181-970 6026)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12.10pm, 2.10pm, 4.20pm, 6.50pm
Home Alone 3 12noon, 2.15pm, 4.40pm, 7pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 12noon, 2.20pm, 4.40pm, 7.10pm
Starship Troopers 12.20pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 4.30pm, 7pm, 9.35pm

ICA CINEMA (0171-930 3647) • Pic Circ
Close-Up 5pm, 7pm, 9pm
Viteloni 6.30pm

La Strada 8.30pm

THE MINEMA (0171-369 1723) • Pic Circ
It's A Wonderful Life 3pm, 6.30pm

NOTTING HILL CORONET (0171-727 6705)
• Pic Circ
Notting Hill Gate Tomorrow Never Dies 3pm, 6pm, 8.30pm

ODEON CAMDEN TOWN (0181-315 4255)
• Pic Circ
Camel Town Hercules 1.10pm
Home Alone 3 1.15pm, 3.45pm
One Night Stand 3.45pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 12.10pm, 2.25pm, 4.40pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 12.45pm, 3.30pm

ODEON HAYMARKET (0181-315 4212)
• Pic Circ
Regeneration 2pm

ODEON KENSINGTON (0181-315 4214)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12.25pm, 2.45pm, 5.05pm
Cop Land 7.15pm
George Of The Jungle 12noon, 2.10pm, 4.20pm, 6.30pm
Hercules 12.15pm
Home Alone 3 1.35pm, 4.10pm, 6.45pm
Know What You Did Last Summer 2.40pm, 5.05pm, 7.30pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 12.15pm, 2.35pm, 5pm, 7.20pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 1pm, 3.50pm, 6.40pm

ODEON LEIC SQ (0181-315 4215) • Pic Circ
Tomorrow Never Dies 12.25pm, 3.05pm

ODEON MARBLE ARCH (0181-315 4216)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12.15pm, 2.20pm, 4.25pm
George Of The Jungle 11.40am, 1.50pm, 4.05pm
Home Alone 3 11.35am, 1.55pm, 4.15pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 1pm, 3.35pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 12.20pm, 3pm

ODEON MEZZANINE (0181-315 4215)
• Pic Circ
Bean 2.35pm, 4.35pm
Face/Off 2.15pm
The Full Monty 12.50pm, 2.05pm, 2.55pm, 4.05pm
The Tango Lesson 2.15pm, 4.20pm

ODEON SWISS COTTAGE (0181-315 4220)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12.30pm, 2.30pm
George Of The Jungle 1.20pm, 3.45pm
Home Alone 3 12.40pm, 3.10pm
I Know What You Did Last Summer 1pm, 3.35pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 1pm, 3.30pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 12.10pm, 3pm

ODEON WEST END (0181-315 4221) • Pic Circ
Alien: Resurrection 1.15pm, 2pm, 3.40pm, 4.40pm

PEPSI IMAX CINEMA (0845-600 0505)
• Pic Circ
Across The Sea Of Time - A New York Adventure (3D) 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm, 4.30pm, 6.30pm, 8.30pm
Beavers 3.30pm
Blue Planet 11.30am
Grand Canyon - The Hidden Secrets 1.30pm, 7.30pm
Thrill Ride - The Science Of Fun 5.30pm

PHOENIX CINEMA (0181-444 6789)
• Pic Circ
Finchley Hercules 3pm
The Tango Lesson 2.10pm, 4.25pm, 6.40pm
Wild 6pm
Will It Snow For Christmas? 4pm

PLAZA • Pic Circ
The Borrowers 4.30pm, 6.30pm
Cop Land 4pm, 6.10pm
I Know What You Did Last Summer 4.05pm, 6.20pm
One Night Stand 3.55pm, 6.20pm

RENOIR (0171-837 8402) • Pic Circ
Kitchen (Wo Ai Chu Tang) 1.35pm, 3.55pm, 6.15pm, 8.40pm
The Tango Lesson 2pm, 4.15pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm

RIO CINEMA (0171-254 6677) BR
Dalcion
Kingland The Borrowers 2pm, 4.15pm
One Night Stand 6.30pm

RITZY CINEMA (0171-737 2121) BR • Pic Circ
The Borrowers 1pm, 3pm, 5pm
George Of The Jungle 1.10pm, 3.10pm
Home Alone 3 1.15pm, 3.35pm, 6.50pm
It's A Wonderful Life 1.05pm, 3.35pm, 6.50pm
Kiss Me Guido 7pm
Mrs Brown 1.30pm
Nil By Mouth 5.10pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 3.55pm, 6.30pm

SCREEN ON BAKER STREET
(0171-486 0036) • Pic Circ
The Borrowers 3.30pm, 5.20pm, 7.10pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 3pm, 6.10pm

SCREEN ON THE GREEN (0171-226 3520)
• Pic Circ
The Full Monty 2.40pm, 4.40pm, 6.50pm

SCREEN ON THE HILL (0171-435 3366)
• Pic Circ
It's A Wonderful Life 3.20pm, 6pm

UCI WHITELEYS (0171-792 3332)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 11.50am, 12.40pm, 2.35pm, 4.35pm
Cop Land 6.30pm
The Full Monty 6.45pm
George Of The Jungle 2pm, 4.20pm, 6.40pm
Hercules 11am
Home Alone 3 11.30am, 1.40pm, 4pm, 6.20pm
I Know What You Did Last Summer 4.25pm, 6.35pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 10.45am, 12.40pm, 2.35pm, 4.30pm, 6.25pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 12.10pm, 1.15pm, 2.55pm, 3.45pm, 6pm, 6.15pm

VIRGIN CHELSEA (0181-970 6010)
• Pic Circ
George Of The Jungle 1.40pm, 4pm, 6.10pm
Home Alone 3 1.30pm, 3.40pm, 6.30pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 2.40pm, 4.45pm, 7.10pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 1.30pm, 4.10pm, 6.50pm

VIRGIN FULHAM ROAD (0181-970 6011)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12noon, 2.10pm, 4.20pm, 6.30pm
I Know What You Did Last Summer 1.50pm, 4.10pm, 6.40pm
It's A Wonderful Life 12.40pm, 3.20pm, 6pm
L.A. Confidential 2.20pm, 5.20pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 1.40pm, 3.50pm, 6.10pm
Tomorrow Never Dies 1pm, 3.40pm, 6.20pm

VIRGIN HAYMARKET (0181-970 6016)
• Pic Circ
The Full Monty 1.25pm, 3.45pm, 6.15pm
L.A. Confidential 2pm, 5pm
Nil By Mouth 3.55pm, 5.35pm

VIRGIN TROCADERO (0181-970 6015)
• Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12.20pm, 2.15pm,

4.20pm, 6.20pm
Cop Land 1.30pm, 4pm, 6.40pm
George Of The Jungle 12.10pm, 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.40pm
Hercules 12noon, 2pm
Home Alone 3 12.15pm, 2.30pm, 4.45pm, 7pm, 9.20pm
I Know What You Did Last Summer 4.15pm, 6.45pm
Spiceworld - The Movie 12noon, 1pm, 2.20pm, 3.20pm, 4.40pm, 5.50pm, 7pm

WARNER VILLAGE WEST END
(0171-437 4347) • Pic Circ
The Borrowers 12.20pm, 2.20pm, 4.40pm, 7pm
Contact 5.10pm
Cop Land 12.10pm, 2.30pm, 4.50pm, 7.10pm, 9.40pm
George Of The Jungle 1pm, 3.10pm, 5.15pm, 7.15pm
Hercules 12noon, 2pm
Home Alone 3 11.50am, 2.10pm, 4.30pm, 6.40pm, 9.15pm
I Know What You Did Last Summer 12.30pm, 2.40pm, 5pm, 7.20pm, 9.30pm
L.A. Confidential 12noon, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm, 8.10pm
A Life Less Ordinary 9.20pm
My Best Friend's Wedding 8.40pm
One Night Stand 1.50pm, 4.10pm, 6.30pm, 8.50pm
Prince Valiant 12.15pm, 2.15pm, 4.15pm
Welcome To Sarajevo 6.20pm

REPERTORY

EVERYMAN (0171-435 1525) • Pic Circ
Hamstead
Metropolis 1.45pm + Blade Runner - The Director's Cut 3.15pm
Kitchen 6pm, 8.45pm

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE
(0171-633 0274) • Pic Circ
Waterloo
The English Patient 2.45pm
The Magnificent Ambersons 4pm

PHOENIX CINEMA (0181-883 2233)
• Pic Circ
Finchley Hercules 2pm
Will It Snow For Christmas? (Y-Aura-Ti De La Neige A Noel?) 4pm
Wild 6pm

PRINCE CHARLES (0171-437 8181)
• Pic Circ
Leic Sq William Shakespeare's Rome And Juliet 1.30pm
Lost Highway 4pm

Buxton Orr

Buxton Daebitz Orr, composer: born Glasgow 18 April 1924; married 1955 Isabelle Roberts (marriage dissolved), 1968 Jean Latimer; died Hereford 27 December 1997.

Buxton Orr's substantial catalogue of expertly crafted compositions ought to be part of the standard concert repertoire; instead, they are known to a small cohort of admirers and to an entire generation of pupils who have made sure that his music remains a living proposition.

Orr was born in Glasgow in 1924, into an artistic family: his mother, Marie Daebitz, was for years a mainstay of the Glasgow Citizens' theatre company, and his maternal grandfather, Richard Daebitz, an immigrant from Germany, led the second violins of the Scottish Orchestra under conductors of the stature of Nikisch, Richter, Richard Strauss, Buxton, whose voice never lost its Scottish burr, would hear stories of these great men at his grandfather's knee.

He was initially intended to follow a career in medicine but, like Robert Simpson just a few years earlier, abandoned it for music. Between 1952 and 1955, now established in London, Orr studied composition with Benjamin Frankel, with whom he was later to work on a number of film and television scores; he also took conducting lessons with Aylmer Buesst.

It was following in Frankel's film-music footsteps that Orr first came to public notice, even if marginally, first with the scores to a number of Boris Karloff and other horror films

and then, with the score to the film of Tennessee Williams' *Suddenly, Summer* (1959), starring Elizabeth Taylor and Katharine Hepburn and directed by Sam Spiegel.

The first of his serious works to attract genuine, widespread attention was his one-act opera *The Wager*, completed in 1961 and premiered by the New Opera Company at Sadler's Wells that year.

Orr's composing career progressed alongside growing prominence as a teacher. He took up an appointment at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 1965, where he was to remain for the next quarter-century, giving up teaching to devote himself to full-time composition only in 1990.

His commitment to teaching was whole-hearted: he founded, for example, the Guildhall New Music Ensemble in 1975 to allow his students to play "difficult" contemporary scores by composers such as Britten and Stravinsky. Indeed, teaching was never a dry, academic experience for Orr: harmony and counterpoint weren't taught by standing up and talking about them; instead, his pupils got to know their theory from the music itself, from the understanding that comes with performing.

The breadth of his interests is confirmed in his ten-year conductorship, from 1970 to 1980, of the London Jazz Composers' Orchestra (founded by Barry Guy, an Orr pupil), with which he toured England and the Continent, taking the group to the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1972.

But despite his music-making and the hundreds of students who passed through his hands at the Guildhall, it

is for his own music that Buxton Orr will be remembered – if it is given a chance to be heard.

His earliest works are quite close to the soundworld of Britten, but it was another Benjamin who was soon to prove more influential: his teacher, Ben Frankel, from whom Orr adopted a kind of tonally directed use of the 12-note row, contrapuntally organised to produce music with a real sense of purpose.

His first love was the human voice and, by extension, the stage: apart from *The Wager* (recently revised for chamber orchestra in the hope of stimulating further performances), there are several music-theatre pieces: *The Unicorn* (1981), *The Last Circus* (1984) and *Ring In The New* (1986), for the last of which, with Michael Bawtree, Orr won the 1988 Seagrams Prize of the American National Music Theatre Network, during his stay as composer-in-residence at the Banff Centre for Fine Arts in Alberta, Canada.

There are six song-cycles for voice and piano or instrumental ensemble, as well: *The Knight and the Lady* (1978) for solo voice, and *The Echoing Green* (1961), after William Blake, for children's voices and piano or orchestra.

His orchestral works likewise show his concern for his audience. In compositions intended for serious listeners, such as the 40-minute *Sinfonia Ricerante* of 1987, Orr deployed his considerable technique to produce music that would satisfy the most demanding intellect.

Yet in others, like the *Triptych* (1977), the *Fanfare and Processional* for strings (1968) or the *Carmen Fantasy* for cel-

lo and orchestra (1987), his sense of humour guaranteed works of immediate appeal. (In fact, *A Carmen Fantasy* began life as the first of a series of four operatic fantasies for cello and piano; the others are *Portrait of the Don* (on *Don Giovanni*, 1987), *Catfish Row* (on *Porgy and Bess*, 1997) and *Tales from Windsor Forest* (on *Falstaff*, 1997).)

A consistent feature of Orr's surprisingly large output is his music for brass or wind band, some ten in total and composed across his career. There are two concertos, for trombone (1971) and for trumpet (1976), both with brass band, and a number of other pieces, not least *A John Gay Suite* for symphonic wind band (1972), *Tournament* for ten solo brass (1985) and the recent *Narration* for symphonic winds (1993), drawn from music for *The Alchemist*, an opera on which Orr was still working at the time of his death. (He left part of the first act orchestrated and the rest complete in piano score. After Benjamin Frankel's death in 1973 Orr orchestrated the piano score of Frankel's opera *Marching Song: The Alchemist* now requires another composer to perform Orr the same service.)

There is also a substantial corpus of chamber music, including two string quartets, three piano trios (the only "serious" Orr to have been recorded on CD), a recent string trio, and most of the series of six *Refrains*, composed between 1970 and 1992 for a variety of instrumental forces; these are basically extended rondo structures in which, as the composer put it, "a recurrent idea is used to bind together a total structure".

But a dry list of compositions doesn't give a picture of the man, of the delighted twinkle in his eye when he was discussing something he held important (I once sat virtually speechless through a dinner where Orr and Hans Keller discussed, with genuine passion, the significance of a particular gesture in a single bar in the slow movement of a Mozart piano concerto). And he never lost that Scottish ability to draw the humour from misfortune.

He told with glee of attending a performance of *Billy Budd* at the Royal Opera House when he was suddenly stricken with the most appalling upheaval in his stomach.

Fearing the worst, he swiftly pushed his way past the knees and baleful glares of the staid audience to try to get out in time. And, Orr would ask with a grin, what do you think the sailors' chorus on stage was singing at this point? "Heave! Oh, heave!"

It is time the classical world caught up with the music of Buxton Orr. The recording of the *Piano Trios* appeared around a year ago on the Marco Polo label, and *A John Gay Suite* is due out before too long from Naxos, Marco Polo's sister, budget label; *A Celtic Suite* for strings (1968) has also been recorded by Black Box.

But that will hardly give an adequate picture of Orr's ability as a composer. Two CD programmes – a coupling of the *Sinfonia Ricerante* and *Triptych* and, less ambitiously, a disc of two *String Quartets* and the *String Trio* – push themselves forward as an obvious place to start.

— Martin Anderson



Music of immediate appeal: Orr conducting, in a drawing by Mileen Cosman, 1988



Woodcock: two fists and a fortune

Bruce Woodcock

Bruce Woodcock, boxer: born Doncaster 18 January 1921; British and Empire heavyweight champion 1945-50; European heavyweight champion 1946-49; married 1947 Nora Speight (one son, one daughter); died Doncaster 21 December 1997.

Bruce Woodcock was one of Britain's sporting heroes in those heady, deprived, optimistic days immediately after the Second World War. He had a snappy left jab, a big, honest heart and plenty of charisma, and was the dominant European heavyweight of his generation.

When the world heavyweight champion Joe Louis retired, the great British sporting entrepreneur of the day Jack Solomons matched Woodcock with another American, Lee Savold, for the vacant championship at White City in June 1950. It was not recognised as a title fight far beyond Britain, but none of that worried the crowd of more than 50,000.

Woodcock's workouts attracted as many as 5,000 at a time. Sadly, his world championship claim evaporated because of a vile, snaking cut which ran the length of his left eyebrow. The fight was stopped in round four.

It is a lamentable reflection of the standards of the day that Woodcock was able to box Savold at all: he was virtually blind in his left eye, the result of an earlier drubbing at the hands of the Pennsylvania former miner Joe Baksi, and yet passed all medical examinations.

Woodcock learned his boxing at impromptu bouts with berybuddy friends in a local cove known as "Three Cornered Wood", and eventually at an amateur club. "Boxed with man in gym," wrote the 13-year-old future champion, "He made my nose bleed." And a little later, "Boxed with same man. He broke my two front teeth. But I know I can beat him now." That's the way he always was. Getting hurt was a part of the job. Winning was what mattered.

As an 18-year-old railway-

man Woodcock boxed for England in the 1939 European Championships in Dublin, and won the ABA light-heavyweight title. By 1942, he was a professional.

For two years, up to the summer night in July 1945 when he became British and Empire heavyweight champion by knocking out Jack London, Woodcock trained in a tiny, home-made gym in an old stable at the back of The Plough pub in Doncaster.

There was no running water, and the tiny ring was jammed flush against the walls, which made sparring hazardous. Yet from these antiquated conditions Woodcock launched himself into world class. The gym, which legend has it was a hiding place for Dick Turpin in the 1730s, is still in use.

Woodcock beat London, whose son Brian would fight Muhammad Ali 20 years later, in the first of the splendid outdoor promotions staged by Solomons. This one was at White Hart Lane. Woodcock won in six rounds. Ever the homespun hero, he declined all

invitations to celebration parties and drove straight back to Doncaster.

He was hurried too quickly into world class and lost to Tami Mauriello in the fabled Madison Square Garden, New York, when he hurt a knee, and yet a fortnight later outpointed Freddie Mills over 12 hard rounds at the Harringay Arena.

Two months later, Woodcock knocked out Albert Renet of France in six rounds to become European champion, and then in September 1946, he stopped Lesnevich in the eighth of a non-title fight before a sell-out crowd at Harringay.

The year's earnings were enough to buy Bruce and his wife Nora their first house, plus another one for his parents away from the poor "Low Drop" area of Doncaster where they had lived for so long.

In his autobiography, *Two Fists and a Fortune*, published shortly after his career had finished in 1951, Woodcock remembered:

Bright lights, gay nights, champagne parties and pretty women are not for me. I know better than anyone how

lucky I was to have the chance to earn the money that lifted us out of the drabness and frequent despair of the surroundings down in the Low Drop. Right from a kid I had to learn the value of every penny.

Woodcock's world came crashing down when he fought Joe Baksi in 1947. He was floored with the first punch, and today the flickering tape bears terrible witness to his immense bravery. Woodcock's punishment lasted 20 minutes, described by the contemporary *Weekly Sporting Review* as "seven of the most wicked and vicious rounds ever endured by any fighter, any time, anywhere".

He remembered the horror only too well. "My legs, arms, head, all seemed to be leaving me. I couldn't see properly. The whole vast arena seemed to be swimming round me in a crazy whirlpool of lights. I lost all sense of balance and distance, all count of time."

His jaw was broken, he had a detached retina in his left eye, yet in the autumn of 1948, he returned with a bloodless victory over the American Lee Oma and then in December

won again when Lee Savold was disqualified for hitting him low.

After a successful Empire title defence in Johannesburg against Johnny Ralph, Woodcock and Freddie Mills drew 46,000 to White City for a rematch. Thousands crammed Great Windmill Street off Piccadilly simply to see the fighters arrive for the weigh-in. Woodcock won in 14 rounds.

The cut eye ruined his chances against Savold, but while the promoter Solomons attempted to talk up a rematch, Woodcock defended his British and Empire titles against the younger, untested Jack Gardner, and retired after the 11th round. Gardner's punches had closed his one good eye.

In retirement, he remained in the Doncaster area, and for many years kept a pub. He rarely talked publicly about boxing, but acknowledged that it had enabled him to put his son through college and provide his daughter with a convent education. That probably meant more to him than any of his victories.

— Bob Mee

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

FLUCK Alan, Artistic Director, Youth & Music and lately Head of Music, Farnham Grammar School, Suddley, at home, Christmas Eve. Funeral at 2pm on January at the Guildford Crematorium. No flowers, please. Donations in Alan's name to Muscular Dystrophy, Benefactor Fund. Memorial Service in London to be arranged. Enquiries to Pimm's Funeral Service, telephone 01483 507394.

PIERCY Hon Penelope Katherine, CBE, peacefully at home on 27 December 1997, aged 81. Funeral service at St Mary's Church, Tarrant Keyton, Blundell Forum, Dorset on Tuesday 6 January at 2pm. Family flowers only. Donations to St Mary's Church, T. Rushmore, c/o Colin C. Pusey, 11, 11a, Salisbury Street, Blundell.

SHEPHERD (late David) (Pete), killed in an industrial accident, Christmas Eve, aged 50. Aged husband of Judy, loving father of Tracie and Matthew, a pet "framed with whiskers" to Antonio, brilliant neighbour, friend and a true "francine".

For BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, please telephone 071-253 3911. Charges are £6.50 a line (VAT extra).

Changing of the Guard The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Wales, mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am. Band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Forthcoming marriages

Mr J. C. Bannerman and Miss A. J. P. Kerr The engagement is announced between James, second son of Mr and Mrs Henry Campbell Bannerman, of Tunbridge Wells, and Alison, younger daughter of Mr and Mrs John Kerr, of Claybrooke Magna, Leicestershire.

Birthdays

Mr Douglas Anthony CH, former Deputy Prime Minister in Australia, 86; Mr Edward Glenwill Benn, life president, Benn Bros, 92; Mr Phil Blakey, rugby player, 47; Sir George Blunden, former deputy Governor, Bank of England, 75; Mr Michael Bonalack, secretary, Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews, 63; Sir George Christie, chairman, Glyndebourne Productions Ltd, 65; Mr Stephen Leoburn, organist, Cambridge University, 49; Air Marshal Sir Patrick Dunn, 88; Sir Anthony Hopkins, actor, 54; Mr Ben Kingsley, actor, 48; Mr Brian McGrath, rugby player, 38; Mr Eric Mackay, former editor of the *Scotsman*, 75; Miss Sarah Miles, actress, 54; Dr Valerie Pearl, former president, New Hall, Cambridge, 71; M Jean-Pierre Rives, rugby captain, 45; Mr Nigel Rudd, chairman, Williams Holdings, 51; Sir John Sainsbury, former Clerk of the Parliaments, 63; Mr Alexander Salmon and MP, 43; The Rt Rev Timothy Stevens, Bishop of Durham, 51; Miss Donna Summer, singer, 49; Mr Hugh Tunnicliffe, former ambassador to Bahrain, 62; Sir David Walker, chairman, Morgan Stanley Group, 58.

Anniversaries

Births: Jacques Cartier, explorer and navigator, 1494; Andreas Vesalius, anatomist, 1514; Soame Jenyns, author and politician, 1704; Sir Edward Augustus Bond, librarian of the British Museum, 1815; Ismail Pasha, Khedive of Egypt, 1830; Henri-Emile Benoît Malibou, painter, 1867; Julia Syme (Julius Kerwin Stein), songwriter and composer, 1905. **Deaths:** John Wadiffe, Protestant reformer, 1384; Catherine of Braganza, wife of Charles II, 1705; John Flamsteed, first Astronomer Royal, 1719; Gustave Courbet, painter, 1877; Sir Malcolm Campbell, speedster on land and water, 1948; Sir Gerald Festus Kelly, artist, 1972; The Rev Canon Lewis John Collins, peace campaigner, 1982; Rick Nelson, pop singer, killed, 1985; Sam Spiegel, film producer, 1985. **On this day:** the Honourable East India Company was chartered by Queen Elizabeth I, 1600; the first Huguenots left France, bound for South Africa, 1687; a window tax was imposed in England, 1695; Thomas Alva Edison demonstrated his incandescent lamp, 1879; the chimneys of Big Ben were broadened for the first time, 1923; the British Army abandoned the use of the lance, except for ceremonial use, 1927; the farthing ceased to be legal currency, 1980; the Central African Federation (Rhodesia and Nyasaland) was dissolved, 1963. **Today is Hogmanay in Scotland and the Feast Day of St Columba of Scots.** St John's Feasts, Regis, St Melania the Younger and St Silvester I, pope.

Lectures

Victoria & Albert Museum: Patricia Baker, "Islamic Prayer Carpets", 2.30pm.

MEANINGS OF CHRISTMAS

The passing of the old and the mystery of the new

However commercialised it has become, Christmas is still a festival from which Jews feel excluded. But the secular New Year, argues Rabbi Jonathan Magonet, is a time for choosing – and belonging.

Jews find the secular New Year a bit of an anticlimax. After all, it's only a few months since we finished celebrating the spiritual marathon of our own Jewish New Year. In the 10 days between our New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement we worked our way through sin, repentance, fasting, forgiveness, a metaphorical death (the white gown we wear on day one of our shroud) and reconciliation with God. Add the Festival of Sukkot, Tabernacles, that immediately follows, with its symbolic journey through the wilderness of life, concluding with the ecstatic festival of "Rejoicing in the Law", to mark the completion of the annual cycle of Bible readings, and we're pretty much spiritually wrong day.

After all that an evening of bubbly, balloons and "Auld Lang Syne" has to

seem pretty tame. Even New Year resolutions feel out of place. We began the Day of Atonement with a formal confession that all our vows or oaths should be considered as null and void – a reference to the promises we make to God to be a better person. So having admitted that we cannot be trusted to keep such vows, creating a lot of New Year resolutions rings pretty hollow.

Besides, we have other Jewish New Years as well. There is a "New Year for Trees", to mark the beginning of spring in Israel, and a biblical "New Year for Kings". And 1 January is not the only new year in the secular calendar. We have a "New Year for Taxes" in April, another for academic studies in the autumn and even a "New Year for Car Number Plates" in the summer. New Years simply mark off time in useful chunks for particular purposes.

For my daughter and her school friends New Year's Eve marks the finish to the Christmas season. Christmas itself means a lot of good movies on the telly. Her Christian friends explain that there may also be a special "family dinner", but since this is only a once-a-year get-together, old family tensions often

come out so that everyone gets a bit ratty. (Jews have the same experience at the annual Passover family meal.) So the New Year is something of a relief since there are no such expectations of brotherly and sisterly love. Instead, for my daughter's circle, everything focuses on the New Year's Eve party: what to wear and who to go with. Even so, she added, it is usually a disappointment. And I also remember those lonely teenage midnights when everyone but me seemed to be partnered and having a ball when Big Ben struck. But at least we choose who we want to share New Year's Eve with, neither tradition nor family imposing itself upon us.

However much Christmas has been commercialised, at its heart there remains a Christian message. Assimilated Jews might even have their own Christmas tree, but they know that the festival is not really theirs. On the other hand, the New Year is utterly neutral. It is a secular occasion available to everyone of every faith or none.

What we celebrate together is actually a kind of shared belonging to this country and this culture. The end-of-the-year documentaries remind us that we have gone through these events to-

gether, and they are now part of our common memory. So we borrow a bit of Hogmanay from the Scots, and "Auld Lang Syne" becomes for a moment our song whether our ancestors invaded the country with the Normans or got off the boat as refugees a generation ago. The very neutrality of New Year's Eve helps it become a kind of unifying ritual for all who call this island their home.

It even has a "theology" of a kind as well. We mark the passing of time, select the events we choose to remember, and explain to ourselves what has brought us to this turning point in our lives. And we allow ourselves a moment of hope that the future will be better, that the bad things of the past will never come again, a hope sometimes as evanescent as our resolutions.

We celebrate the simple fact that we have survived to be together for one more such occasion. Our collective memory as a nation meets our hope for the future. Together we count down the seconds until no church bells, but rather the sombre tones of Big Ben, toll for the passing of the old and offer just a touch of un- ease before the mystery of the new.

Arise Sir Elton, and enjoy the joke. It really doesn't hurt



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It's that time of year again, when pop stars and football players, Olympic medal winners, comedians, bell-ringers and Brown Owls, astronauts and architects, microsurgeons and music-fest managers, Samaritans and swimming teachers, lollipop ladies and that other kind of lady that is quaintly described as being "in waiting", all get to be listed together in the annual New Year Honours ritual. And part of the ritual – obligatory, really – is for *The Independent* to agonise in the nicest possible way over why we bother with this business at all.

Once again, with a certain ambiguity of purpose, we find ourselves devoting two pages of fine Norwegian spruce to listing a motley collection of names chosen by the Establishment to join (in a minor way) the Establishment, or at least to be given its condescending, lofty recognition, bless their hearts.

Why do we print this list? Well, for one thing, it's immensely enlightening and entertaining to read. You learn delightful things. (Did you



know that old "Fluff" Freeman is 70 – 70, for heaven's sake? Or that the creator of *The Worms* is still up and about in Aldeburgh, of all places?) If

you were a Martian (or, say, an American – about the same thing when it comes to interpreting British social manners), you would find fascinating material for research on pages 18 and 19 of this newspaper.

Most prominent glory goes to a man called Elton Hector John, a chap who is considerably stranger than his name, which is anyway not his own, but an invented appellation which someone once thought would make an improvement on Reginald Dwight, a name that some might regard as stranger still. Mr Dwight's claim to having a sword slapped on his well-padded shoulder is ostensibly his service to charity and show-business (and probably football, for all we know); really, it's a populist gesture by the People's Establishment (defined as the Blair-Windor love-in) towards all those folk who found his funeral performance of "Candle in the Wind" their biggest emotional release of the year.

Let's be clear about this. Knights are characters who

joust up and down with lances, dressed in heavy metal and waving fancy crests. Sir Elton, as we must soon call him, is indeed prone to dressing up in outlandish costumery, though somewhat less than he was. But quite why we continue to garland illustrious folk with titles that are best followed by names such as Launcelot and Galahad, it is hard to say.

The good side of the honours system is obvious. If you run your eye down that long list of MBEs and OBEs you are effectively tracing the backbone of decent, upstanding Britain. It is a roll-call of the kind of characters who keep thousands of institutions and communities and charities alive and busy. Behind many there is no doubt a story to warm the soul: the Suffolk postmistress who is no doubt the civic heart of Dalham; the Aldermaston woman whose services to the community include "particularly the Nativity play"; the founder of the Toot Hill Dance Band, wherever that may be. They, and the hos-

pice workers and fundraisers and primary school teachers who so deserve, at least once in their lives, to be recognised – yes, honoured – by the citizenry to whom they give so much.

But the honours list, also, is given over to antiquated imperial absurdities. The long lists of civil servants and soldiers picking up their Buggins's-turn gongs. The courtiers, with their bizarre lists of letters that are granted for simply doing their job – something that the rest of the nation does without much recognition. And then the even greater absurdities, of anti-establishment intellectuals such as Eric Hobsbawm and David Lodge – to name but two – who nevertheless find it in themselves to accept orders of an empire which they ought to regard as an anachronism.

One long-standing angle of attack on the honours system is that it entrenches privilege and patronage in a debilitating way – a way that other, more modern countries do not find necessary. This is mostly nonsense.

For a start, many other countries have their own systems of honours, though admittedly less bedecked with garters and ribbons. Even Americans and Germans (in their guilds and associations) hold local beauefeasts to honour people who are part of their gang. And the New Year list is rarely packed with very much in the form of repayment for services questionably rendered. Paul Hamlyn's elevation to the Lords is as appropriate a recognition as any other in today's list.

So, does the giving of these honours hurt anyone, apart from a handful of aspirants who feel they should not have been left out? Does it, in any real way, threaten our social fabric? Is it corrupting? Not at all. Is it an out-of-date, rusty practice in a supposedly modernising Britain? Most certainly. More pertinently, don't we really feel the whole thing is faintly daft? Without question. But then, many dafter things are done in the name of cultural continuity.

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and include a daytime telephone number.
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk
E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address.
Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Safe food

Sir: As enforcers of food safety legislation, we appreciate the comments in your leading article (23 December) on the need for the Food Safety Agency to enjoy public trust.

That "producer interests" may have played too strong a role in the formulation of food safety policy is a view with which enforcers concur. However, what consumers, food producers and enforcers want most – and quickly – is clear information. Impartial advice and considered actions by government are essential to protect both public health and food businesses.

The recent beef-on-the-bone regulations are a case in point. We made our position clear to the Government that the regulations as they stand are extraordinarily difficult to enforce. What we require is government direction and information to enable local authorities to enforce the regulations more effectively. As health professionals we are fully committed to measures taken to protect the public against BSE. We need guidance to achieve this.

One of the key arguments for the Food Safety Agency is that it would be able to provide this information while responding in a considered way to advice from scientific committees. This would avoid political pressures which can induce either unduly delayed or panicked responses, while the public, enforcers and food producers are supplied with information to minimise risks to public health.

MICHAEL COOKE
Chief Executive
Chartered Institute of
Environmental Health
London SE1

Sir: Creating a Countryside Ministry while breaking up the Department for the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) on the way (leading article, 23 December) may seem an attractive response to the Ministry of agriculture's failure to evolve from a ministry for farming, but could actually make a bad situation worse.



Radical heroes of the 20th-century Liberal tradition: David Lloyd George, Maynard Keynes, William Beveridge – and Tony Blair?



Blair and Lib Dems

Sir: According to Donald Macintyre ("Why Blair will soon invite Ashdown into the Cabinet", 30 December), Paddy Ashdown and Menzies Campbell would have subjected a post-election Blair offer of Cabinet posts to a test of "What's in it for the Liberal Democrats?" So why is it unreasonable to ask that question now? For that is the central question all party mem-

bers will rightly want answered.

In our current electoral system the power of patronage for Cabinet places for individuals from minority parties lies with one party leader. But the not so distant future may bring proportional representation, when it would instead be up to the electorate to confer opportunities for coalitions between parties. That would mean formal negotiations on agreed programmes, not a blank cheque. And PR-based

coalition politics would make merger unnecessary.

If Paddy Ashdown is offered a Cabinet post and accepts it he may make a significant statement about abandoning tribalism in British politics in favour of parties working together, but he will also be judged to have concluded that the Liberal Democrats have reached a high water mark of 46 Commons seats with nowhere else to go.

I look forward to some re-

bust negotiations if such an offer is made. Whilst it is certainly not Paddy Ashdown's style to shun risks, he will expect those risks to be spread. Tony Blair will at least need to back PR in the expected referendum.

STEVE HITCHINS
Leader, Liberal Democrat
Group, Islington Council
London N1

Sir: We Lib Dems would never join Tony Blair in any alliance

of the centre-left. The single-parent benefit incident proves that Tony Blair is the natural leader of the centre-right. If the Conservatives split, Ken Clarke and Michael Heseltine could easily join him. By background, upbringing, instinct and manner, Blair is a Tory grandee.

It is a farce for him to say he admires Keynes, Beveridge and Lloyd George: he is attacking all they ever stood for – and I speak as a Liberal who still has the

obituary press cuttings I took when Lloyd George died. That radical Liberal trio would fully endorse the protest from the Labour MEPs Ken Coates and Hugh Kerr against government policy on the welfare state.

The idea that we Lib Dems would sustain Tony Blair against Ken Livingstone and his friends has always been political theory run mad.

DEREK J COLE
St Leonards, East Sussex

Cold meteorites

Sir: Charles Arthur ("Search for Greenland's thunderbolt", 16 December) perpetuates a popular misconception when he states that "On landing [a meteorite] would be incredibly hot, and melt its way through the icecap". Meteorites are cold when they land. Hence they preserve a record of their history in space.

When a natural object enters the atmosphere from space, its minimum velocity is about mach 40. Friction with the air causes the surface to melt and, as above Greenland, a bright fireball is produced. The melt on the surface is carried into the atmosphere and takes the heat with it, and the inside keeps the cold of space.

If the object breaks up or is small, it decelerates, the fireball goes out and it falls to Earth fairly gently, under gravity. It would make a shallow pit in soil or ice. If the object is large – over about 100 tonnes – and stays intact, it is hardly braked by the atmosphere and may strike the surface at hypersonic velocity to produce an explosion crater. In this case the meteorite is essentially destroyed.

ROBERT HUTCHISON
Hemel Hempstead,
Hertfordshire

The Herod bug

Sir: Miles Kingston's explanation of King Herod's policy for the 0-2-year olds (22 December), according to recent new evidence from deciphered scrolls, is in doubt.

The policy arose from the great abacus crisis in the Roman taxation department. For years these had counted down from BC dates and could not easily be reversed when it came to AD. It was found that the problem would take two years to sort out. To keep the taxation records straight for the future it was necessary to eliminate the 0-2-year olds.

JOHN PICKIN
Cheltenham,
Gloucestershire

Something horrible happened at the New Money party



MILES KINGSTON

This is the last day of the Old Year, and we all know what that means.

It means you will all be going out tonight to behave disgracefully and get drunk, and we all know what that means.

It means tomorrow you will be sitting in a darkened room, wishing you had something light but challenging to read, something bracing but short, a kind of mental pick-me-up.

This is a complete New Year's Eve mystery story.

There are enough clues scattered through the story for you to be able to work out the answer to the mystery.

Yes, even a hungover wreck like yourself should be able to work it out.

Right, here we go then with our brand-new Hogmanay tale, entitled:

"This is the last day of the Old Year, and we all know what that means."

It was New Year's Eve, and the guests were arriving at Parvenu Towers for Lord Parvenu's New Year's Eve Party. The first Lord Parvenu had been created in the 1540s for services to Henry VIII (he had dissuaded him from marrying a seventh wife, for which Henry VIII was extremely grateful, though not as grateful as the intended wife was) and although the name of "parvenu" had suited him then, for he was indeed New Money, or "Ye New Money", the Parvenus had become one of the most tradi-

tional families in the country.

One tradition they had established was their grand New Year's Eve Party, which every year had a different theme.

One year in the 1890s it had been a Bring Your Own Wild Animal Party, at which the eighth Lord Parvenu was unfortunately mauled by an emu.

One year in the 1920s the young ninth Lord Parvenu had organised a Marathon Dancing New Year's Eve Party. The marathon dancing had been so enthusiastic that all the guests had ended up 26 miles away at someone else's house.

During the Second World War, the New Year's Eve Party tradition had never been broken – one year they had had a "Beat The Blackout – Bomb Us

If You Dare!" Party, at which all the lights were left blazing. German bomber pilots flocked from miles around to bombard Parvenu Towers, but they were all fairly plastered, it being New Year's Eve, and the best they could manage was a direct hit on Parvenu Park, creating a crater which later became Parvenu Lake.

Now, in the 1990s, it was time for the Parvenu Party again. This year Lord Parvenu (the 11th) had decreed that it should be a Guess-The-Contents-of-the-Millennium-Dome Party.

"It's sort of fancy dress," he explained. "You dress up as someone you think will be commemorated in the Millennium, or you come along as

someone you think will be involved in the creation of the Dome. There will be a prize for the best idea."

"And after that?" someone asked him.

"After that we all get pissed as usual," he said.

Everyone was there. There were members of the Cabinet. There were members of the Shadow Cabinet. There were research writers for Kitty Kelly, there were Andrew Lloyd Webber lookalikes, poor chaps, there were minor members of the Royal Family (so minor that they had never been divorced), and there was the artist formerly known as Madonna.

There was also a Middle-Eastern looking gentleman whom nobody recognised, strik-

ing-looking with piercing eyes. "Is it Alan Yentob?" somebody wondered.

"Is it Mohammed Al Fayed's younger son that nobody knows about?" wondered someone else.

"My gosh, is it perhaps Salman Rushdie and will he get murdered at midnight?" gasped someone else.

Midnight came nearer. The party grew wilder. The coming and going of helicopters on the Helipad (where Parvenu Lake had been filled in for the very purpose) grew more purposeful.

Just before midnight, the man who looked like Salman Rushdie went up to Lord Parvenu and whispered in his ear. Lord Parvenu smiled and reached in his pocket. He hand-

ed something to the man looking like Rushdie, who handed something back. As midnight struck, the man looking like Rushdie was talking on a mobile phone, and you could have heard him say: "We've got it! And here's the heading! Push-er Parvenu Caught Red-Handed!"

OK, that's the story. Have you solved the mystery?

That's right! The man looking like Rushdie was actually a *Mirror* reporter entrapping Lord Parvenu into an ill-advised sale of white powder.

But don't worry. There was a happy ending. Before he could file his story, they caught the reporter and pushed him into the Parvenu Safari Park. The hyenas fed well that night.

hurt

Rich countries get help. It's the way of the world



DIANE
COYLE
ON IMMORAL
DEBT POLICY

I may be an unusually mean-spirited person. But there always comes a point during the Christmas shopping season when I balk at shelling out more money. I spend cheerfully on my nearest and dearest, then find myself skimping on the presents bought more from a sense of obligation than affection.

And then, funnily enough, the purse strings loosen again when the New Year sales start.

It may be just me, but I take comfort from the fact that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is just as bad. It has spearheaded a massive rescue package to save South Korea from a catastrophic financial crisis, making available emergency funds of up to \$100bn over the next few months.

Philanthropic enough, you may think, except that it reveals a starkly selfish set of priorities. For it has taken the IMF following the lead set by leaders of the Group of Seven industrial countries, most of this decade to agree grudgingly on less than \$10bn-worth of debt relief for some of the poorest countries in the world, to be eked out over several years.

The only conclusion you can draw from this is that we, in the richest countries in the globalised world economy, collectively don't give a hoot for the poorest. But we will give generously to the ranks of the nearly-rich, when they get into a bit of financial bother, because of the risk that their crisis will spill over into our economies.

This is short-sighted as well as immoral. But let us start with the morality. By any calculation the debt burden on poor nations is crippling and inhuman. For example, Mozambique's debt service last year amounted to double its combined spending on health and education. It is a country where infectious disease kills a quarter of all children under five, and where two-thirds of the population is illiterate.

In Bolivia, where nine out of 10 rural people live in poverty, and only 16 per cent have access to safe water, debt repayments this year have been three times the rural relief budget.

Both countries will qualify for the debt relief package, known as the Highly Indebted Poor Countries, or HIPC, initiative. But the reduction in their interest payments to the IMF, World Bank and rich governments will be small and slow. In a decade's time they may have reached a point where their debt burden is at last shrinking because they have paid enough interest.

It was a struggle to get the meagre HIPC initiative approved by the international community - a struggle in which both Gordon Brown and Kenneth Clarke, his predecessor as chancellor of the Exchequer, have played an honourable part. Germany and Japan, and to a lesser extent Italy and the US, have held out firmly against greater generosity.

But what is astonishing is their belief that very poor countries will carry on

meekly paying interest, over more than a generation, on debts often incurred by corrupt and brutal dictators. Never before in history has this kind of debt burden been repaid.

Take an example from the First World War. The great economist John Maynard Keynes calculated in 1921 that if Britain had to continue repaying its war loans from the United States, it would take 60 years of interest payments equal to what was then the annual budget for education, or to one new hospital a month. The debt from 1914-1918 would not have been cleared until 1984.

Keynes was also an ardent critic of the decision to force Germany to make punitive reparations. He asked: "Will the discontented peoples of Europe be willing for a generation to come so to order their lives that an appreciable part of their daily produce may be available to meet a foreign payment?" Obviously not. He concluded that nations could not make another people pay for debts incurred by the leaders of a previous generation.

After the Second World War, the Allies applied the lesson learnt from the disaster of demanding reparations after the Great War. In 1953 half of Germany's international debts were cancelled outright by a conference of bankers meeting in London. According to Jürgen Kaiser, of the University of Vienna's Department of Economics: "The London agreement was an important milestone on the way to West Germany's economic miracle."

The only difference in the case of today's Third World debt burden is that Western governments do not see it as a crisis. South Korea is a crisis because its financial markets have been nosediving, threatening to take Wall Street and London down with them. But clearly, death, despair and poverty in countries outside the financial loop do not constitute a crisis.

These priorities may satisfy short-term self-interest: which politicians want to ask their taxpayers for even a penny extra in tax for the world's poor and starving? But they could do huge long-term economic damage. The growth of trade and overseas investment has been an enormous boost to the rich economies, and, as the international links spread ever further, should continue to be so. Our prosperity is built not only on our own efforts but also on those of other countries, in what should be a mutually enriching process.

By making it so painfully obvious that some countries - those most like us - matter vastly more than those small and far-away nations of which we know little, the IMF and G7 risk a backlash that will halt the beneficial, interlinked growth of the world economy. The rest of the world does not like the economic recipe of our political and financial classes. And if globalisation is not seen to be for everybody, it will not benefit anybody.

Ironically, the backlash may even come from South Korea, where ungrateful workers are more likely to blame the IMF for tough measures that will put them out of their jobs than to thank it for stumping up billions of dollars in loans to stabilise the currency. There will certainly be more human disasters in the very poorest countries, not that these have so far prodded the financiers into mending their ways.

I may be a Scrooge about Christmas presents, but I can find it in my mean spirit to switch my tax contribution to the Millennium Dome or the National Lottery Fund to cancelling a chunk of Third World debt by the year 2000. It seems worth it for a more prosperous and peaceful world. The trouble is that the spirit of taxpayer generosity will have to spread far more widely to make any difference.

The answer to life and the universe? Well, that depends on the question



OLIVER
MORTON
FINDS WEB
SITE INSIGHTS

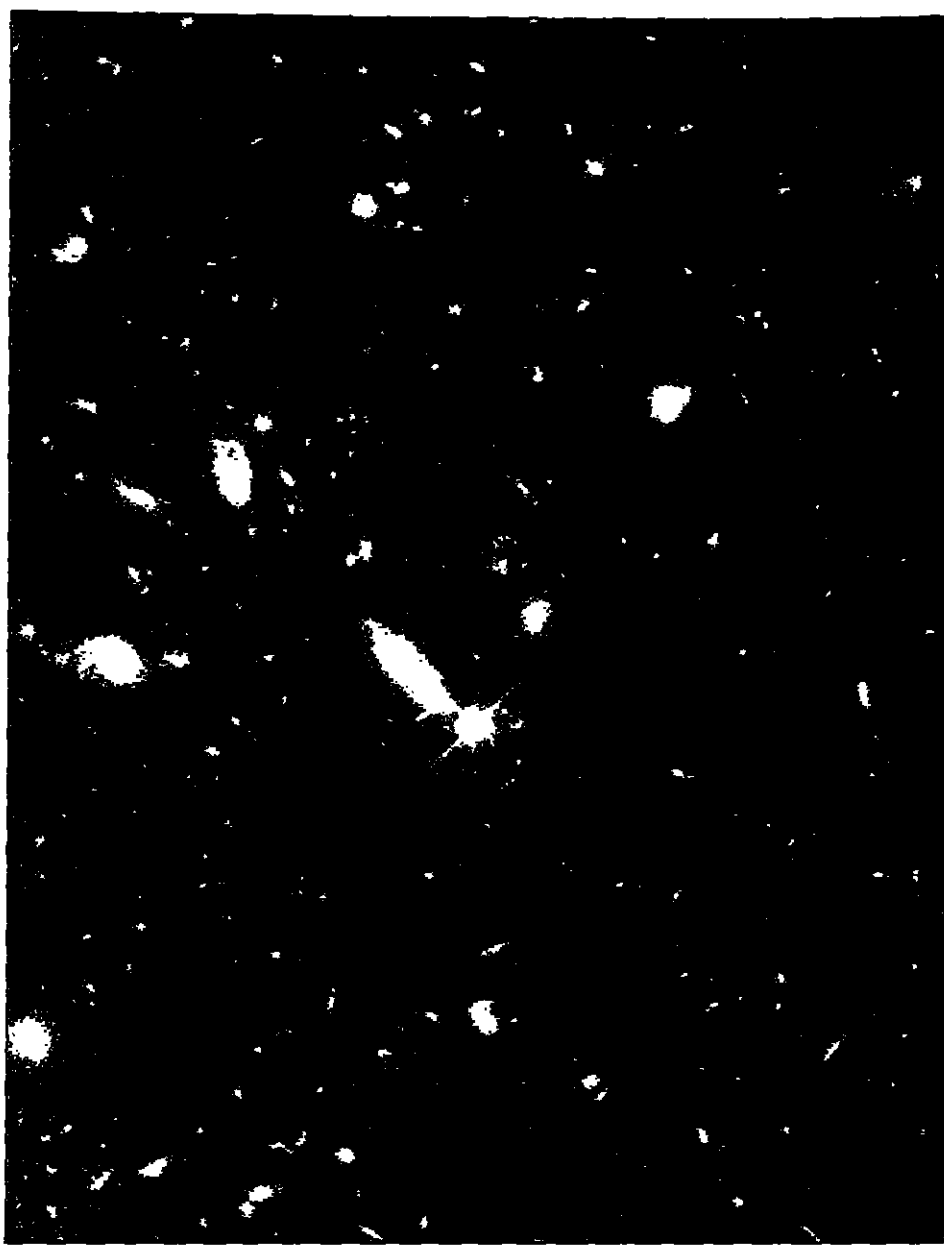
The new year is traditionally a time for the imperative. I will lose five kilos; control my temper better; learn the bassoon; enhance my homepage with Java; whatever. This year, why not take a break and shift to the interrogative instead. Don't resolve. Question. Don't focus on what you're not doing, but look at what you don't know. Ask yourself a few questions to which you would really like answers. They can be questions about anything in the world - one of the advantages of questions over resolutions is that you don't have to limit them to the personal. That said, though, the questions will be personal too: what you want to know says a lot about you.

This suggestion is inspired by a parlour game on the world wide web.

Edge (<http://www.edge.org>) is a sort of salon run by John Brockman, a literary agent and writer who went a long way towards cornering the market in scientist-writers during the post-Stephen Hawking science-writing boom. For the past year it has been home to often lively, sometimes obscure and almost always ambitious discussions about emerging insights into the sciences and the new digital world. It is a sort of ongoing digital Start the Week, with more nuts and bolts and less Melvyn Bragg.

For Edge's first anniversary, Brockman asked everyone who contributes - an in-crowd of his clients, various other scientists and science writers and a selection of the "digerati", by which is meant people who discourse on new communication technologies with some sort of authority - to send him the question that mattered most to them. For anyone with an interest in what science and technology have to offer humanity the result is provocative, not only in the questions this reasonably influential bunch is asking itself, but also in those it passes over.

Many of the questions are firmly centred in the questioner's own research, sometimes so much so that they seem reasonably obscure to anyone outside the discipline involved. Steven Pinker, author of *How the mind works*, asks a question about one detail of that working: "How does the brain represent the meaning of a sentence?" Alan Guth, the man who dreamt up the notion of



What they really, really think about: a Hubble telescope image showing light from galaxies that has taken up to 15 billion years to reach Earth - about the time the Universe was created. Those contributing to the web debate were far more concerned about that kind of topic than more earthly matters

Photograph: NASA

cosmic inflation as an explanation for the evenness, and much of the bigness, of the Big Bang, asks how we can know which sorts of universe are more probable than others.

Some of these insider questions are incisive. Richard Dawkins cuts to the heart of his own work by asking "What might a second specimen of the phenomenon that we call life look like?" Like geology, biology is a one-off science: there is only one Earth, and all life on it is one family, with a common ancestor. Only by studying other life elsewhere can we come to understand how much of life is necessarily the way that it is and how much is just the way things are on Earth. Life forms elsewhere may be hard to find, but probably easier to make sense of than Guth's alternative universes.

Various Edgians asked after these aliens, wondering whether we would recognise them if we found them (good question) and what they would mean for established religion. Others wondered if we might not build them ourselves. A range of questions, mostly asked by people who work in the catch-all field of "complexity", effectively ask what is special about arrangements of

matter that are capable of agency, and can we create new ones, possibly using computers?

An allied question, and possibly the most interesting of the bunch, comes from William Calvin, a theoretical neurophysiologist (and an amateur climatologist too, but that's another story). "How will minds expand, once we understand how the brain makes mind?" Part of this question's strength is in its breadth. You can treat the question as being about psychoactive drugs, or computer enhancements, or new teaching techniques, or whatever you like. But it is equally impressive in its scope.

Consider an analogue from history. Before we understood how cells make proteins, we could not make any of them ourselves, and had to make do with those nature provided. Now we do understand. We use designer proteins for many medical purposes - and will soon use them for a vast range of technological and agricultural ends. If we can understand how brains produce thinking, the increase in possibilities might be just as large, and far more personal. Asking us to think about how we use those new possibilities asks us about our moral and social worlds as

well as our physical and intellectual areas of interest.

In bridging this gap between intellect and right action, Calvin achieves something that most of the Edgians do not. Some of them ask questions about science; others ask about its implications, and more generally about how to better the world. Very few found a question that covered both. It is not clear whether those posing the pure science questions actually value those questions more than they do political and social questions, or whether they just, rather realistically, accept that while their view on what matters in science is interesting their wider views might be less so. But it is clear that the questions about how to better the world were asked from an intriguing set of perspectives.

Anyone who thinks that scientists and their fellow travellers are uninterested in religion will be in for a surprise. While there are no questions about God and some negativity about organised religion - David Gelernter, computer scientist, cultural critic and Unabomber victim asks "When will the nation's leading intellectuals come clean and admit that Biblical doctrine (on women, nature, homosexuality, the ab-

solute nature of moral truth and lots of other topics) makes them cringe and they are henceforth not Jews and not Christians, and the hell with old time religion?" - there is quite a lot about the need for new spiritual values.

Some of these questions are more overtly religious than others, but the plaintive requests for a more long-term approach to the world and its resources, like Stewart Brand's "How do we make long-term thinking automatic and common instead of difficult and rare?" seem much of a piece with the more overtly spiritual, if rather instrumentalist, question posed by Colin Tudge, one of Britain's best science writers: "Can we devise a religion for the 21st century and beyond that is plausible and yet avoids banality - one that people see the need for? What would it be like?" And the cosmologists often sound religious anyway. John Barrow, professor of astronomy at the University of Sussex, asks: "Is the Universe a great mechanism, a great computation, a great symmetry, a great accident, or a great thought?"

But while they acknowledge the spiritual, these seekers after truth ignore many more earthly and more pressing problems. No one asks how to cure cancer, or how many Brits are going to die of mad cow disease. No questions bear directly on the development of the Third World, or on gender equality, or on poverty. Some questions doubtless have such concerns at their heart, but they tend to be phrased in rather universalist, abstract language. There are social concerns here, but they are largely couched in terms of individuals and biological; have we evolved to be prejudiced, or murderous, or capable of only some sorts of intellectual endeavour?

It should not be surprising that 100 intellectuals discouraging on a website end up a little detached from the real world. But that detachment underscores what some of the questioners were asking themselves: how do we get science to do good? As yet, we do not know. Science, at this sort of level, is still very much an intellectual and personal set of questions, not a social one. We are quite good at getting science-based technology to make money, but we are a long way from understanding how to make it responsive to people's desires, needs and goals.

The question posed by Steven Rose, professor of biology at the Open University, is: "How to ensure that we develop sciences and technologies that serve the people, are open to democratic scrutiny and which assist rather than hinder humans to live harmoniously with the rest of nature". It is a specialist's way of asking one of the best questions of all: how can I make things better, not just for myself, but for everything and everyone? If that is not the question you are asking yourself for the new year, what is?

Is it time for that Cabinet minister (nudge, nudge: you know the one) to grass on himself?



PAUL
ALLEVEY
THE PAIN OF
PARENTAL FAME

So who is the cabinet minister whose son has been accused of drug-dealing? The question was raised at a dinner party in London the other night - indeed, it must have been raised at a thousand such occasions all over the country in the past few days. Half of those present on this particular occasion knew the identity of the minister, because they had direct access to people who knew. One person had come across it on the Internet. Others had worked it out from the way the stories had been written in the papers. By the time the evening was over, of course, everyone was in on the secret. And with the subsequent parties of the week the tawdry fact will ripple through what we now call the chattering classes.

Once they were called the metropolitan elite, and there was a time when all manner of political titbits circulated among them; gossip denied to the general public. Sometimes it was just tittle-tattle. At other

times whispers of turpitude led to mysterious resignations in high places. At its high point it concerned itself with clandestine scandal around the royal household, which eventually led to the abdication of King Edward VIII.

Democracy and an unfettered press have, by and large, put an end to the notion that "everyone who counts, knows". Today it is generally affirmed that there is above all one group which counts and which also needs to know: the electorate. But does it need to know about the adolescent misdemeanours of politician's children?

Some have said that the cabinet minister concerned acted cynically in frog-marching the unfortunate youth down to the local police station after the *Mirror* to report that one of its 30-year-old journalists had bought £10 worth of cannabis from the 17-year-old boy. The politician, they said, had

shoppped his or her own son to protect their political career.

That reaction is unfair. Most responsible parents would have done the same thing on the grounds that immediately confronting the problem would minimise the damage. In the unlikely event that the police did prosecute, the teenager's swift contrition would undoubtedly lead most magistrates towards leniency.

The dilemma which confronts the minister is a different one. It may be the right thing for a father to persuade his son to confess to the police, but should a politician not also own up to the public? As a parent he knows this is a bad idea: identifying himself would be tantamount to doing what he hopes his prompt action has averted - once the epithet "Minister X's drug-dealer son" gets into the newspaper cuttings it will for ever dog the unhappy young man and make him a prisoner of his past. Though most of those in his circle of

acquaintances and schoolmates will already know by now - and probably will not disapprove - of him reportedly selling £10 worth of dope in a pub, the 17-year-old's parents may fear that future employers could take a different view.

But what is best for a parent is not necessarily what is best for a politician. If that minister speaks now, or in the future, on home affairs, education, health, social security or any one of the portfolios where "parental responsibility" can become an issue, it is hard to see how his or her credibility might not be called into question. This government has made so great a point of the issue - whether in the area of curfews for unruly children or single parents' responsibility to work - that it has already laid itself open to general accusations of a new puritanism. Even if malicious Tory backbenchers do not spice their question with asides to the effect that "I blame the parents myself", the

minister can be sure that the press will be watching like hawks, or vultures, for any trace of inconsistency, any suspicion that policy is being reinforced or diluted, or any sign that this hapless parent is having to pass certain aspects of business to colleagues leave

It may be right for a father to persuade his son to confess but should not a politician also own up?

ing him or her a lame duck minister in those areas. In the event of anything like that the press might reveal the full sorry facts.

Lord Wakeham has been huffing and puffing that the new tighter Press Complaints Commission code of practice forbids such revelation. True, it does say

under Clause 6: "where material about the private life of a child is published, there must be justification for publication other than the fame, notoriety or position of his or her parents or guardian". But the code also allows exemptions where publication can be demonstrated to be in the public interest. Clause 1(iii) of this covers material "preventing the public from being misled by some statement or action". Newspaper lawyers have already suggested that shifts in the nuance of political pronouncements on the question of parental responsibility might well constitute a defence in the present case.

Certainly the position has not been helped by the arrest of the *Mirror* journalist who set out to expose the minister's teenage son. There were those who expressed glee at the arrest of a reporter engaged in what they regard as meretricious journalism with its sanctimonious pronouncements

over such an absurd commonplace little crime. But it is an unhelpful development. For a start, there will be those for whom it smacks of "who will rid me of this turbulent press?" But more importantly it drags into the case the whole question of the freedom of the press. It was politically maladroit because it has seriously upped the ante.

The dilemma between parent and politician is not a new one. It was the one faced by Harriet Harman over her son's education, and which she resolved by declaring that her responsibility as a parent must always come first. It may well be that the unnamed cabinet minister with the rebellious son has made the same decision. For all we know his resignation - or a request to be moved to a different portfolio - may be preoccupying the Prime Minister in his Seychelles holiday hideaway and a reshuffle will be forced. Or perhaps he is just sitting tight, and hoping it will all go away.

We won't plunge the country into recession, says Eddie George

The pound's high exchange rate should prove unsustainable, while the economy needs to slow down, according to the Governor of the Bank of England. But Eddie George does not intend to plunge the country into recession to meet the inflation target, as he told Diane Coyle.

The Bank of England has raised interest rates four times since Gordon Brown gave it the power to do so on 6 May. The most frequent criticism made of the newly independent Bank is therefore that it has been trigger-happy, over-reacting to scant inflationary signals when the pound is already too strong for comfort.

The Governor, reviewing the events of the past year, denies the charge of being an "inflation nut". Framed in his magnificent office by one austere piece of himself, he told *The Independent*: "Of course, when we get a situation as we have had where the strength of the exchange rate is exaggerated, the people who are directly affected by that will feel the discomfort."

The Confederation of British Industry rubbed this home yesterday, voicing a new year wish for a lower exchange rate. But despite the dilemma for setting interest rates posed by the strong pound, Mr George insisted: "We need a slowdown in the economy next year, there's no question." Although there are uncertainties about the timing and degree of this slowdown in the economy, Mr George added: "We're not at the point where we need to plunge it into recession again."

He went on to explain that the new Monetary Policy Committee, created by the Chancellor to set interest rates, would not feel bound to keep inflation within 1 per cent, either way, of the

2.5 per cent target at all costs. If the target measure goes beyond those bounds, the Governor has to send a letter to the Chancellor explaining why. "People talk in terms of a range as if this was something we can't go outside. I don't see it like that," the Governor said. Although hastening to add that he did not see inflation going outside the range in the near term, he said: "If there were a very powerful reason for going outside that 1 per cent either side, then I think that's what the Monetary Policy Committee would advise the Chancellor."

Mr George was also keen to stress that setting monetary policy is an uncertain process. Under the old system, he had one meeting a month to try to persuade the Chancellor to take the Bank's advice. By May, he said: "We were clearly behind the game." It was not until August that the Bank could credibly claim policy was back on track.

"What we have now is a genuinely open debate with people exploring alternative interpretations. What that reflects is the imprecision of the process. I don't think you ever get it exactly right," Mr George said.

Even so, he professed himself reasonably happy with the current policy. He downplayed fears of general upward pressure on pay, a concern in the City, saying the behaviour of the jobs market so far had been encouraging.

There was even a faint hint that the Bank might be taking a more relaxed view about falling unemployment than many observers have assumed. "Clearly, if we could run the economy at a higher level of employment without this producing upward pressure on pay, then everybody would be happy, even the inflation nutters at the Bank of England," Mr George said.

He said that, despite the complaints of exporters, higher interest rates were only part of the explanation for the strong pound. Rates "will peak,

may already have peaked, I really don't know," he said.

"But you can't explain much of the appreciation in those terms, so we conclude that it's a question of market expectations about the nature and characteristics of the euro. Perhaps as we get closer they will change."

Along with gaining independence for the Bank, Mr George rates Gordon Brown's statement clarifying the Government's intentions towards the single currency as one of the high points of 1997. He bills himself as a "Euro-pragmatist".

"I have never opposed the principle in a doctrinaire way. But I have never felt the time and the place were right, certainly not for the UK."

Mr George predicted that monetary union will go ahead with a broad membership, as the markets expect. But he clearly remains sceptical about the tensions bound to be generated by a "one interest rate fits all" policy for countries with very different economic structures.

The low point in the past year had been the loss of the Bank's responsibility for bank supervision, Mr George said. "It wasn't the principle, it was the manner," he explained.

However, his relationship with Mr Brown has improved from that low point, and the Governor's contract, which expires next spring, is widely expected to be extended. Mr George, who would clearly like to stay on, said the Chancellor had not yet discussed this with him.

Apart from the Bank's difficult task in setting interest rates at the right level, Mr George picked out Asia as the main cloud on the horizon for 1998. "There is no question that Asia is serious," he said.

Is it more serious than previous crises? "It's right in the forefront of the mind, it's the immediate problem. But if you go back to the debt crisis of the early 1980s, I don't know that I would feel it is worse than that."



Eddie George surveys a model of the City of London. The loss of the Bank of England's responsibility for bank supervision had been a low point, he said

Harrisons pays £280m for US chemicals group

Harrisons & Crosfield accelerated its transformation from conglomerate to speciality chemicals group yesterday with a £280m deal to buy a US chemical additives producer. As Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports, Harrisons also revealed a bigger than expected £400m special payout to its shareholders.

Harrisons is buying Rheox, a US company which it claimed was the world leader in chemical additives that control the viscosity of products such as coatings and adhesives. The New Jersey business, owned by the NL Industries group, employs 370 staff and owns a Californian opencast clay mine. Rheox made profits of \$39m last year on sales of \$135m, but Harrisons insisted the \$465m (£280m) purchase price was good value, compared with some recent chemicals deals. It will be financed from cash resources and a new £450m loan facility.

"We are paying 11.8 times earnings for this company. If you look at other valuations, such as ICI's deal to buy Unilever's speciality chemicals business, that is distinctly low," said Bill Turcan, Harrisons' chief executive.

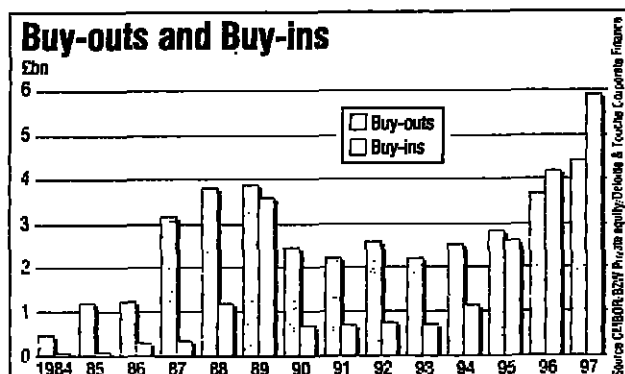
Mr Turcan said the purchase was likely to be the last big acquisition for at least a year and completed the group's "breakout" from a troubled petfoods and chemicals conglomerate. Harrisons has so far raised £479m from a disposal programme, including £318m from the sale of Harcos, its builders' merchants arm to Meyer International, owner of the Jewson chain. Earlier this month it raised a further £106m from the sale of Edward Baker Petfoods.

Harrisons gave its shareholders an unexpected boost by announcing a £402m share buy-back plan, worth 56p a share. The company had previously said the payout would be not less than 50p a share, worth £359m. However, investors will not receive a final dividend for this year, compared with last year's 5.4p final payout. Harrisons shares rose 6.5p to 139p on the news.

The group dampened hopes of a sale of BOCM Pauls and Pauls Malt, its food and agriculture businesses, blaming adverse market conditions, including the BSE crisis.

Venture capitalists fear the bubble may burst after another record year

Britain's venture capitalists are on a roll. In the past 12 months, they have spent more than £10bn taking companies private - a 33 per cent increase on the figure for 1996 and a new record. Peter Thal Larsen hears worries that the bubble might be about to burst.



Given the vast sums of cash venture capital firms still have available for investment - over £8bn was raised by new funds during the year - 1998 is unlikely to be any different.

But some observers, including a number of senior venture capitalists, see signs of an unsustainable boom. "At this stage of the cycle, there is a growing worry that the next transaction may be a deal too far," says Tom Lamb, a senior director of BZW Private Equity.

He points to the increasing size of private equity deals. The £900m CinVen is believed to have offered Reed Elsevier for IPC, its consumer magazine stable, is just the latest in a string of large transactions. Other deals include the £700m buyout of bookmaker William Hill by Nomura, the Japanese bank, and the £15m put up by Legal & General to acquire BTR's polymers business.

Venture capitalists are victims of their own success. Since

the recession of the early 1990s, most have generated returns on their investments of 30 per cent or more a year - comfortably outperforming the stock market.

Money has also flowed in from the US, where the returns from venture capital have recently been lower. Of the funds raised in the past year, experts reckon as much as half has come from American investors.

The result is that funds are getting larger. In 1997 venture capital groups Schroders, Doughty Hanson, Charterhouse Development Capital - best known for its buy-out of the Porterbrook train leasing group - has been sitting on an £800m fund since May, but has yet to invest a penny.

A frequent complaint is that funds like CinVen - which can draw on the huge British Coal, Railways and Barclays Bank pension funds - are pushing up prices by overpaying for deals.

But CinVen, which tops the UK buyout league for 1990-1997 with deals worth £4.87bn, says its success is the result of its willingness to fund additional investment in the companies it backs.

But many venture capitalists are taking a more hands-on approach with groups are

petition. "In the UK you now have a classic auction with four or five companies looking at each transaction," says Tim Wright, assistant director at Apex Partners.

Many venture capitalists are finding it hard to invest their funds sensibly. For example, Charterhouse Development Capital - best known for its buy-out of the Porterbrook train leasing group - has been sitting on an £800m fund since May, but has yet to invest a penny.

A frequent complaint is that funds like CinVen - which can draw on the huge British Coal, Railways and Barclays Bank pension funds - are pushing up prices by overpaying for deals.

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But many venture capitalists are taking a more hands-on approach with groups are

playing an active part in the running of the business. This can mean pursuing acquisitions in the same industry to generate economies of scale.

In March, Doughty Hanson, one of London's most aggressive private equity investors, spent more than £400m buying packaging businesses from Pechiney of France and Germany's Schmalbach-Lubeca. By merging the two, Doughty created one of Europe's largest metal packaging companies.

"Financial buyers are becoming the conglomerates of the 1990s," says Mr McKenzie. "They are assembling companies, and can also put more debt into them than the stock market is comfortable with."

The lack of sophisticated equity markets may also make it harder for investors to float their businesses when they come to seek an exit.

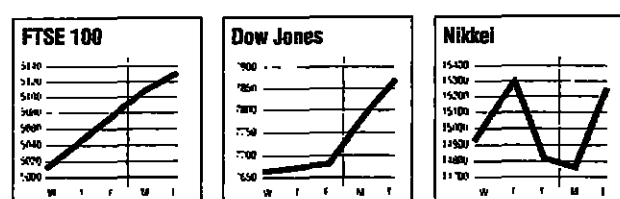
With private equity deals growing in size and complexity, the risk is that any economic slowdown will leave venture capitalists with burned fingers. Many see alarming parallels with the late 1980s, when private equity funds launched ambitious buyouts of kitchens group Magnet and supermarket chain Gateway, only to watch them go spectacularly wrong when the recession hit.

Even if that can be avoided, one thing looks certain: venture capitalists will find it a lot harder to make money in the next few years than they have in the previous five.

However, BA executives believe the judge's decision to throw out the USAirways case bodes well for how she will approach Virgin's claims. A Virgin spokesman described this as "a load of tosh" adding: "There is no relevance between the two cases and to say otherwise reflects total ignorance."

— Michael Harrison

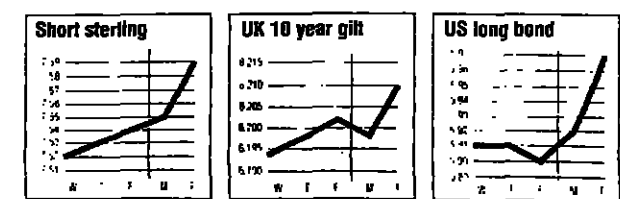
STOCK MARKETS



Indices

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5132.30	19.90	0.39	5367.30	4036.90	3.38
FTSE 250	4768.10	35.90	0.76	4963.80	3394.20	3.36
FTSE 350	2466.50	11.20	0.46	2570.50	2013.40	3.38
FTSE All Share	2467.74	11.00	0.45	2507.68	1989.78	3.38
FTSE Smallcap	2297.40	19.80	0.86	2407.40	2168.20	3.46
FTSE Technology	1259.40	5.70	0.46	1346.50	1219.90	3.39
FTSE AIM	989.90	3.30	0.33	1138.00	965.90	1.17
Dow Jones	7868.39	75.73	0.97	8293.03	6353.21	1.74
Nikkei	15258.74	483.52	3.27	20910.79	14488.21	1.02
Hang Seng	10755.21	252.22	2.40	16820.31	8775.88	3.94
Dax	4249.69	52.32	1.25	4459.89	2833.79	1.88

INTEREST RATES



Money Market Rates

Index	3 month	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr	1 yr
UK	7.68	1.13	7.69	0.66	6.33	-1.18	-1.48
US	5.81	0.25	5.97	0.18	5.80	-0.50	-0.57
Japan	0.79	0.29	0.74	0.16	1.94	-0.83	-0.62
Germany	3.64	0.48	3.93	0.68	5.37	-0.41	-0.71

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

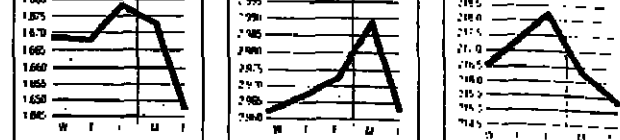
Rises

Index	Price	Chg	% Chg
Schroders	1751.00	101.00	6.01
Laureate	276.00	9.00	3.27
Billion	155.00	5.00	3.33
Reckitt and Col	962.00	27.00	2.89

Falls

Index	Price	Chg	% Chg
BOC Group	991.00	29.00	-2.84
Tesco	456.00	-11.00	-2.37
Marx & Spencer	594.00	-13.00	-2.13
Wolsey	476.00	-8.00	-1.65

CURRENCIES



Pound

Index	at 5pm	Change	% Chg	1 yr Ago
Dollar	1.6547	-1.59c	-1.6905	1.6905
D-Mark	2.9633	-2.46p	2.6298	2.7905
Yen	215.36	-¥1.65	198.31	198.31
£ Index	105.60	+0.80	95.60	108.70

Dollar

Index	at 5pm	Change	% Chg	1 yr Ago
Sterling	0.6043	+0.57p	0.9215	0.9215
Mark	1.7905	+0.33p	1.5568	1.5568
Yen	130.15	+¥0.25	116.21	116.21
\$ Index	108.70	+0.30	98.80	98.80

OTHER INDICATORS

at 5pm

Index	Close	Chg	% Chg	1 yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	16.29	0.03	23.35	113.90
Gold (\$)	290.15	-0.80	RPI	159.80
Silver (\$)	6.20	-0.04	4.88	Base Rates
				7.25

www.bloomberg.com source: Bloomberg

South Korea rescue hits trouble over guarantees

The multi-billion dollar plan to bail out South Korea hit an obstacle yesterday after banks in the US, Europe and Japan said any agreement to roll over short-term debts would depend on the central bank guaranteeing repayments. In effect they are asking the Korean government to turn private debt into sovereign debt.

The government made it clear that this was too much for it to swallow. Officials in Seoul say that they have never permitted the transfer of private debt to sovereign status and will not do so now. After two separate meetings in New York, bankers issued statements of support for South Korea in a move aimed at giving a psychological boost to the global bail-out effort.

Phone numbers agreement

Phone customers will be able to keep their number when they switch companies from April, it was announced yesterday, after agreement was reached with Ofcom, the telecoms watchdog. Until now only BT has been obliged to provide so-called number portability for its customers, but from April all fixed phone companies will have to offer the service. Ofcom said it would have referred them to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission if they attempted to block the move.

More McDonald's jobs

Fast food chain McDonald's yesterday unveiled plans to create another 10,000 jobs before the Millennium today, just a day after the company trumpeted expansion plans to create 5,000 new jobs during 1998. Altogether McDonald's is planning to open 100 new restaurants next year and another 200 in 1999 and 2000, boosting its number of outlets to 1,130. The growth will create 5,000 new jobs next year, and another 10,000 before the year 2000 - 3,750 full-time and 11,250 part-time.

Rise in lending weakens

Mortgage lending by the main high street banks rose by £737m in November, a decrease from the previous month's £787m, the British Bankers' Association confirmed yesterday. The amount of future new lending approved also weakened, with both number and value dropping by around 10 per cent during the month. There were 70,690 loans approved, with a value of £4.1bn. The BBA said comparisons with earlier in the year were not possible because former building societies had been added to the figures as they converted.

US confidence higher

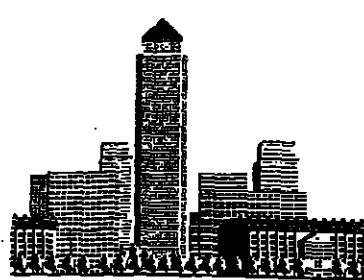
Consumer confidence in the US has jumped again this month, reaching its highest level since June 1969. Despite reports of weaker-than-expected department store sales over the holiday season, the Conference Board said confidence was at the highest this year and also at historically strong levels.

Brian Basham

Contrary to the item in yesterday's People and Business column, Brian Basham tells us his fist did not connect with David Burnside's nose, nor did they leave in separate cabs and end up staying in the same house. Neither was there blood on the carpet nor any subsequent need to make up. What actually happened was that as he and Mr Burnside attempted to embrace, Mr Burnside's nose collided with Mr Basham's ear. We are happy to set the record straight.

Harrisons pays
£280m for US
chemicals group

Harrisons & Crossfield announced a transformation from conglomerate to specialty chemicals group yesterday via a £280m deal to buy a US chemicals additives producer. An independent Business Correspondent reports. Harrisons also revealed a large £200m special dividend to its shareholders.



OUTLOOK ON HOW GLOBALISATION BECAME THE GREAT THEME OF 1997

That was the year the world went global

It's an awful word, admittedly, but "globalisation", both of the world economy and business strategy, does seem to have been the big theme of 1997 for business and finance. When you think about it, virtually all the significant business and financial events of the year have been driven by the perceived need to adapt to progressive integration of the world economy. It scarcely needs saying that this process is by no means a new one; it is as ancient as trade itself. All the same, we do now seem to be at something of a watershed of development. Over the past year there has been a quantum leap, a huge acceleration of the process.

The most obvious manifestation of this has been in the economic crisis and accompanying market turmoil of the Far East. No national economy, it now appears, can remain immune to the power and disciplines of international capital; the *derisive*, semi-corrupt, cronyism of these economies has been rudely exposed and the currencies and equity markets of the region have suffered accordingly. Capital pursues the highest returns, and perhaps belatedly, but certainly decisively, it has made up its mind that much of what was going on in the Far East was protected and uneconomic.

The triumph of the American economic model has been an integral part of the progressive globalisation through the movement of capital of the world economy. Indeed, the word "globalisation" may be a bit of a misnomer, for what is happening is not so much a homogenisation of different forms of economic organisation and management as a world-wide mimicking of the

US economy, the integration of the world into the American way of doing things.

This has been the year in which the Asian economic model, and other forms of communitarian capitalism, have been finally discredited. Japan and her protectionist ways have been humbled as never before to the extent that even her most traditional and conservative leaders now accept that Anglo-Saxon style structural reform is the only way out of a vicious deflationary circle of monetary and fiscal tightening. Capital and the conscience free, often brutal way in which it moves about is perhaps the largest part of this process, but the freer movement of intellectual property, technology and skills across national boundaries that has been a feature of recent years is the other part of the equation.

Paradoxically, the new Labour Government has been able to embrace this process in Britain with a degree of enthusiasm that eluded its Conservative predecessor, which philosophically ought to have been much more in tune with it. The Bank of England has finally been granted independent control over monetary policy while Gordon Brown is proving himself a much tougher Chancellor in terms of fiscal discipline than Kenneth Clarke. For the first time in recent memory, a clear strategy for economic management into the indefinite future has been laid out, and most people accept that ministers are going to stick to it.

Combined with the last Government's labour and capital market reforms, putting Britain well ahead of the wave in terms of structural reform in Europe, this has allowed Britain to bask in an almost

unprecedented degree of approval from financial markets. One result of this has been a strong pound, which may be something British industry is going to have to learn to live with.

The change of Government has also brought about a sea change in Britain's attitude to and relationship with Europe, including the single European currency. If the truly global market place still has a way to go yet, it is about to become a reality in Europe bringing about, for the first time this century, a trading block on a par with that of the US. New Labour has reformed Britain's position on the single currency in a way that now makes early participation at least possible.

Focus and consolidation have been the twin mantras driving the corporate sector this year. Again, the progressive breakdown of national barriers across industries as diverse as telecommunications, banking and engineering has been the sub text for the jargon. The need to perform in an increasingly competitive international market place has driven managements to "focus" on their core capabilities and skills. This has been accompanied by consolidation within industries, both at a national and international level, in order to bring about economies of scale and better serve the needs of more demanding and better informed customers.

At its most ambitious, this process was epitomised by British Telecom's bid for MCI, one of the US's largest long-distance telecommunications carriers. The merger drew some hostile comment from the press and certain parts of the City and it may

well be that the target was misconceived. Alternatively, BT may just have been ahead of its time in its attempt to establish the global telecommunications company, for the Americans eventually closed ranks and outbid BT.

The year end has brought with it the world's most ambitious banking merger to date - that of Switzerland's top two banks, Swiss Bank Corporation and Union Bank of Switzerland. In its wake has followed a whole host of me-too calls to national regulators. Martin Taylor of Barclays has gone public with his view that British banks should be allowed to respond with their own mergers. In the City, the UBS/SBC merger is bringing about a further shake-out in the investment banking sector with the loss of up to 3,000 jobs as UBS Phillips and Drew is subsumed by SBC Warburg.

Meanwhile, NatWest and Barclays have given up the investment banking quest entirely, finally admitting they are unequal to the task of competing on cost and market reach with Wall Street's bulge bracket operators. The City, that most international of market places, is itself falling victim to the process of globalisation.

Elsewhere, Guinness and Grand Metropolitan have merged to create the world's largest drinks combine. ICI has reinvented itself by selling off its diverse bulk chemical interests to more appropriate managers and buying Unilever's specialty chemicals business. Unilever has meanwhile chosen to "focus" on its core consumer products and BTR is selling off half its assets so as to concentrate more

effectively on the needs of its main engineering businesses.

Another key pressure on managements this year as never before has been to maximise the use of capital in the most cost-effective way. This has spawned a legion of share buy-backs, special dividends and other forms of capital repayment. Again this is a phenomenon imported from the US which looks set only to accelerate over the next few years. And again, since cost of capital is now viewed as a key constituent of international competitiveness, it has its roots in the process of globalisation.

All these pressures of the old year are going to be present in even greater form in the new. We live in a time of great economic change and opportunity. Despite the traumas of the Far East and the deflationary brake they will be applying to the world economy, we also live in a period that justifies great optimism. The challenge for policy makers as we enter the next millennium is not so much that of attempting to slow or accelerate the process of globalisation. An unstoppable momentum has already developed and it is too late for that.

Rather, it is to address the easily put to one side and socially destabilising side effects of the process - the growing gap between rich and poor and the environmental degradation that goes with it. The world may be integrating as never before, but it is also dividing as never before - into the haves and the have nots. On that pessimistic note, and for those readers who have got this far, a prosperous and happy new year to all.

1997: The year the markets cheered a Labour victory

This year was a roller-coaster for investors, businesses and their leaders. The stock market surged to a new high and then fell back as the Asian crisis started to bite. A spate of takeovers and demergers saw some of the UK's best known corporate names disappear while some of the leading personalities in the City bowed out of the limelight. Chris Godsmark, Nigel Cope, John Wilcock and Andrew Yates review an eventful year.

JANUARY:

The new year got off to a flying start as £1m-a-year "superwoman" Nicola Horlick was publicly despatched from her job as head of Deutsche Morgan Grenfell's £18bn pensions fund business. She flew to Frankfurt to demonstrate unsuccessfully with the Bank's German owners with a press pack in tow.

British Airways' attempts to forge an alliance with American Airlines were grounded, as the European Commission and US rivals piled on the pressure. For thousands of building society investors, 1998 promised to be a year of windfall payouts. Halifax revealed it would give 8 million members 200 free shares when it floated on the stock market in June.

FEBRUARY:

Ms Scardino's honeymoon ended abruptly as Pearson broke the news of "accounting errors" at its US Penguin Books business, costing it £100m. The irregularities were found to be the work of just one employee. Shares soared in a stock market tiddler. Lanica Trust, as rumours circulated that its leading light, a 31-year-old entrepreneur called Andrew Regan, was planning an audacious bid for the Co-Op. Yorkshire Electricity became the last regional power company to be bought in the wave of US acquisitions. The buyers, AEP of Ohio and PS Colorado, paid £1.5bn. February also saw a landmark demerger, as British Gas split itself into two companies.

The disagreement over interest rate policy intensified between Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England and the Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke. With one eye on the election Mr Clarke blocked a rate rise, though the pound continued to soar.

MARCH:

NatWest's investment banking business was plunged into crisis as the bank revealed a £77m "hole" on interest rate options contracts. Senior managers came under attack, which Martin Owen, chief executive of NatWest Markets, tried to deflect by foregoing £200,000 of his £500,000 bonus.

Liam Strong's hold on power weakened at Sears, the struggling Selfridges and shoe shop group. Negotiations to sell the Freemans catalogue business to N Brown of Manchester collapsed, forcing Sears to restart talks with Littlewoods.

As share prices continued their prolonged bull-run, a salutary warning came from Warren Buffett, the US investment guru. He joined Alan Greenspan, governor of the Federal Reserve, with a warning that shares were overvalued. The markets took months to respond.

APRIL

The month was dominated by the year's biggest City story - Andrew Regan's £1.2bn break-up plans for the Co-Op. It burst into action as the Co-op suspended and later sacked two senior executives for supplying confidential information to Regan. Allan Green, the Co-op's retail chief, was photographed handing over documents to Regan in a Beaconsfield hotel car park.

As Regan's was poised to mount his bid he was stopped in his tracks by a High Court order banning him from using any of the confidential documents. The affair ended in a blizzard of legal action. Hambros, the investment bank backing Regan, was forced into a humiliating apology.

Elsewhere, Sears announced a break-up as Liam Strong quit as chief executive. Overseas, the entire board of Nomura, the Japanese securities house, resigned over a racketeering scandal.

MAY

Shares soared on Labour's election victory and Gordon Brown, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, moved fast. He granted independence to the Bank of England on the Monday after the election victory. Base rates were increased to 6.25 per cent at the same time. Just weeks later he announced radical plans to fold existing City regulators into a new "super-regulator".

Inflation fears loomed as the Halifax windfall drew near, unemployment fell to a seven-year low and London house prices passed their 1989 peak. Guinness and GrandMet announced plans to merge to create the world's largest spirits company.

JUNE

The Halifax flotation netted members shares worth an average of £1,400 as the building society-turned-bank made its



A year to remember: (clockwise from top left) Chris Evans gets into bed with Richard Branson after buying Virgin Radio, Marjorie Scardino takes over as chief executive at Pearson, Gordon Brown sees red as he launches Sets and Nicola Horlick departs in a blaze of glory



house agreed to merge to create a global accountancy business with annual revenues of £8bn. The consolidation on Wall Street also continued with Salomons agreeing to a \$9bn merger with Travelers Group, owner of Smith Barney.

OCTOBER

Martin Taylor decided investment banking was too risky for Barclays, and put BZW up for sale. BZW's chief executive, Bill Harrison, resigned and the rumour mill on Barclays bidding for NatWest started up in earnest. Pressure also grew on NatWest's chairman, Lord Alexander, to follow suit and ditch NatWest Markets.

BT still appeared to be on track with its bid for American telecoms giant MCI. The drive for cross-border mergers, driven by the advent of European monetary union (EMU), gathered pace. BAT announced its intention to split off its financial services side and merge it with Zurich Insurance, in a deal worth £22bn.

The tenth anniversary of the Great Crash of 19 October 1987 came and went without a murmur on the markets. But the Asian currency crisis, which started with the devaluation of the Thai currency, gathered pace. In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng index fell 18 per cent in a week and then recovered, spurring talk of a "white knuckle ride", and Gordon Brown watched share prices dive as he switched on the Stock Exchange's new order-driven dealing system, Sets.

NOVEMBER

BT's bid for MCI was blown away by WorldCom's knock-out offer. BT sold its stake in MCI for a healthy profit. Interest rates rose to 7.25 per cent.

Credit Suisse bought BZW's corporate finance and equities businesses at a knock-down price, prompting criticism of Martin Taylor and Bupa launched its hostile bid of £241m for Care First. Mercedes-Benz was forced to withdraw its new "Baby Benz" after the car overturned in a test designed to simulate an elk crossing the road.

Merrill Lynch snapped up Mercury Asset Management for £3bn. Ann Iverson resigned from Laura Ashley after a series of profit warnings.

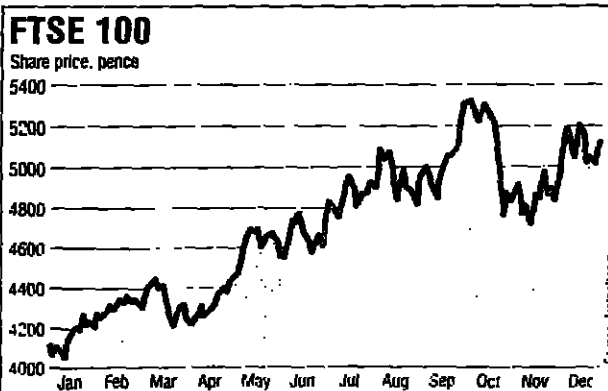
Gordon Brown's Green Budget provided few thrills. The replacement of PEPs with Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) drew criticism for its ceiling of £50,000.

The financial crisis in Japan deepened with the £14.9bn collapse of Yamaichi Securities. South Korea accepted a \$60bn rescue package from the IMF.

DECEMBER

Two of Switzerland's "Big Three" banks, UBS and SBC, agreed to merge, prompting forecasts of a "jobs bloodbath" for their investment banking arms in London. NatWest sold its investment banking side to Deutsche Morgan Grenfell and Bankers Trust. NatWest continued to hold out against a merger with Barclays. Ginger-haired DJ Chris Evans shocked the nation by raising £85m to buy Virgin Radio.

The usual Christmas shopping boom failed to materialise, and retailers started preparing for a sale of £3bn of unsold goods in the new year. The FTSE 100 ended its penultimate full day of trading yesterday at 5,132.3, a 25.8 per cent rise, while the pound looked set to end the year at DM2.97, up 13 per cent.



stock market debut. But the joy was short-lived as the newly formed Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) raised base rates another 0.25 per cent to 6.5 per cent. It was the first time since 1945 that rates have been changed without government interference.

Lord MacLaurin bowed out as chairman of Tesco after 38 years with the company. Other departures - some planned, some not - included Martin Owen, who was ousted as chief executive of NatWest Markets, casting doubts on the investment bank's future. Bill Cockburn quit as chief executive of WH Smith after just 18 months in the job.

Energy Group, owner Eastern Electricity, was snapped up by PacificCorp of the US for £3.7bn. The Government blocked the Bass/Carlsberg-Tetley takeover and shares soared in Hong Kong as the curtain came down on British rule.

JULY

The month kicked off with Gordon Brown's first Budget. The centrepiece was the £5bn welfare to work programme, funded by the windfall tax on privatised utilities. But the abolition of tax credits on dividends

was a blow to pension funds and left millions facing higher pension contributions.

Woolwich became the latest building society to turn into a bank, bringing an average windfall of almost £200 for 2.5 million members. But Nationwide successfully repelled calls from Michael Harder, a freelance builder, to demutualise. Interest rates edged up again to 6.75 per cent.

On the corporate front, Burton, the menswear group, announced plans to demerge Debenhams. Bernard Arnault launched another raid on GrandMet's shares in his bid to block the £23bn merger with Guinness.

The first signs of the growing economic crisis in the Far East emerged as Thailand was forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund for a financial rescue package.

AUGUST

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, highlighted the Government's tough new competition policy, by referring PacificCorp's £3.7bn bid for Energy Group to the MMC.

Sam Chisholm, the chief executive of

BSkyB, howled out on a low note as the shares fell on disappointing results. Troubled times too for Ann Iverson, Laura Ashley's embattled chief executive, who announced the closure of two factories and predicted a £4.5m loss for the half year.

BT renegotiated the terms of its merger MCI cutting the value of its original offer by £3.5bn in the wake of the US phone group's profits warning.

The FTSE 100 index broke through the 5,000 barrier for the first time but August ended with the stock markets tumbling around the world as the growing economic crisis in Asia raised the spectre of a crash. The MPC decided to raise interest rates another quarter point to 7 per cent.

SEPTEMBER

Richard Clothier, chief executive of Dalgery, the Winalot and Felix pet food business, left his job, paying the price for the group's dismal performance.

The IMF's annual economic forecast said the world economy was in its best shape for a decade and praised Britain.

Croppers & Lybrand and Price Water-

Korea rescue hits
ie over guarantees

numbers agreement

McDonald's jobs

in lending weakens

confidence higher

n Basham

Ionica stages a recovery but still has a long way to go

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Any share which more than doubles in the seven trading days of Christmas should have enjoyed a truly joyful ride.

But not Ionica, which climbed from 60p to close at 134.5p, up a further 11p. It remains desperately short of any festive cheer. For the fledgling telephone group's recovery has to be seen against a horrendous slide - from 421p.

Since a 390p summertime flotation it has persistently dialled the wrong numbers. As the shares weakened the company produced the sort of gloomy statement which rears uneasily with an expected high flyer. Its problems were then compounded by its sudden and unexpected removal from the FTSE 250 index, which forced tracker funds to unload.

The group's discomfort made it an easy target for bear

raiders, who piled on the agony by selling short.

But the stock market is a fickle place. As the bears retired with their profits the telephone group's directors appeared as buyers. The long retreat was over.

During the slide there was talk that the group was in danger of breaching its banking covenants and was facing a showdown with institutions. Such suggestions were hotly denied and with more than £200m in the bank, seemed absurd.

But Ionica faces problems and was clearly overpriced in the summer. It has admitted its national roll-out is nine months behind schedule and teething troubles are restricting capacity and limiting customer sign-ups.

The rest of the market, in yet another round of thin trad-

ing, scored modest gains which, of course, will help year-end portfolio valuations. Footsie, after 32.4 points ended 1919 up at 5,132.3. The supporting indices also made headway.

Toddy's Footsie calculations are, for the first time, to be adjusted by the Stock Exchange if it feels final prices are not representative. The decision to fine tune year-end prices, used for portfolio valuations, is a clear indication that even the Exchange is prepared to consider the shortcomings of its new order-driven trading system. With many funds using quarterly valuations it would follow the Exchange should carry out price adjustments at least every three months.

Doubts returned about seasonal spending, sending most retailers lower. Marks & Spencer lost 13p to 597p and Tesco 11p to 49p. The cau-

tious nature of Littlewoods' trading statement caused the disquiet.

Still Wicks, the do-it-yourself chain, rose 3.5p to 277.5p - the shares have been under-looked since April's low - and MFI, the furniture group, added 7p to 119p.

Buying in a thin market hit the non-voting shares of the Schroders investment

group 101p to 1781; the voting stock gained 35p to 1935p.

Harrisons & Crossfield hardened 6.5p to 139p following its US buy and decision to return 50p a share to shareholders. On Friday H&C, under the name of Elements, switches from the conglomerate to chemical sector.

An IT sector will make its debut on Friday. The signalled constituents have attracted attention. Logica up 40p to 1.130p; FT Group rose 17.5p to 432.5p and Lynx 7p to 116.5p. Each reached a new high.

Religion-threatened Tottenham Hotspur was back to a year's low as worries about coach Christian Gross nudged the shares 1p to 75.5p. In January the price was 138p.

Tullow Oil dipped 5p to 137p after abandoning a Pakistani well; another well tested

gas at commercial rates and was suspended as a future producer. There were rumours Tullow (and Cairn Energy) will hear today about developments in Bangladesh.

Arcadian International, the hotel chain, held at 60p; it said talks with a possible bidder had reached an "advanced stage".

Gartland Whalley & Baker, owner of 27 per cent of bid-threatened Independent Paris, gained 5p to 110.5p.

Parkwood, a facilities management group, held at 46.5p against last year's 65p placing. Two weeks after the shares were hit by a profit warning, chief executive Tony Hewitt increased his stake to 47.9 per cent, buying just under 1 per cent at 45p.

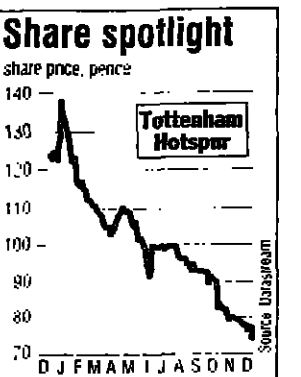
Expectations of corporate action lifted Cambridge Mineral Resources 0.25p to 16.75p.

TAKING STOCK

Enviromed, the healthcare group, put on the day's best display, surging 53 per cent to 13p. A steady stream of small buy orders was responsible. The buyers believe corporate action will erupt above the price at which the board held negotiations. Share activity on Monday prompted the group to disclose it had held talks with something below 6p the indicated price.

Bond International Software made a bright debut, closing at 89.5p from a 65p placing by stockbroker Durlacher. The company supplies the recruitment, personnel and tourism markets. Profits are expected to be £700,000.

Merrill Lynch expects the demerged Cordiant Communications to achieve profits of £24.1m this year rising to £40.1m in 1999. The shares gained 7p to 108.5p.



52 week	High	Low	Stock	Price	Chg	YTD	P/E	Code
100	100	100	Alcoholic Beverages	100.00	+1.00	0.7	4.0	1000
100	100	100	Alcon	100.00	+1.00	0.7	4.0	1000
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make history every day.

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Bloomberg
FINANCIAL MARKETS
COMMODITIES
NEWS

Foreign Exchange Rates

Country	Sterling Spot		Dollar Spot		D-Mark	
	1 month	3 month	1 month	3 month	1 month	3 month
U.K.	100.00		0.6143	0.6052	0.6089	0.5875
Australia	2.2376	2.2345	1.5134	1.5333	1.5348	1.5363
Canada	20.8429	20.905	20.749	22.569	22.566	22.566
France	6.5653	6.5653	1.4923	1.4923	1.4923	1.4923
Germany	2.2764	2.2701	2.2602	1.4359	1.4359	1.4359
Denmark	1.2920	1.2545	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21
Finland	8.9766	8.9766	1.4947	1.4947	1.5025	1.5021
France	4.975	4.982	5.2433	5.2499	5.2499	5.2499
Italy	2.2834	2.2834	1.7929	1.7929	1.7929	1.7929
Greece	48.676	48.676	47.54	47.54	47.54	47.54
Japan	23.253	23.253	23.253	23.253	23.253	23.253
Spain	1.557	1.5558	1.5234	1.5237	1.5238	1.5239
Italy	29.010	29.007	28.884	27.645	27.645	27.645
South Korea	2.425	2.425	1.935	1.935	1.935	1.935
Malaysia	6.4245	6.4220	6.4231	3.9590	3.9590	3.9590
U.S.	13.338	13.338	0.6050	0.6050	0.6050	0.6050
Netherlands	2.2832	2.2832	1.4947	1.4947	1.4947	1.4947
New Zealand	2.2832	2.2832	2.2832	1.742	1.7417	1.7417
Norway	2.204	2.204	1.9357	1.7342	1.7340	1.7342
Sweden	2.204	2.204	1.9357	1.7342	1.7340	1.7342
Saudi Arabia	6.2046	6.2046	6.2025	3.7505	3.7508	3.7508
Singapore	2.7278	2.7278	2.7199	1.6756	1.6810	1.6810
Thailand	2.204	2.204	1.9357	1.7342	1.7340	1.7342
Taiwan	2.204	2.204	1.9357	1.7342	1.7340	1.7342
Spain	3.07	3.07	2.985	1.682	1.682	1.682
Switzerland	2.204	2.204	1.9357	1.7342	1.7340	1.7342

Other Spot Rates

Country	Sterling	Dollar	Country	Sterling	Dollar
Argentina	165.49	10.00	Oman	62.371	0.3850
Brazil	18.470	1.161	Pakistan	72.316	44.000
Chile	13.702	82.736	Philippines	34.822	34.000
Colombia	34.822	1.277	Poland	5.7372	3.670
Egypt	5.6176	3.2845	Qatar	6.0247	1.6405
Ghana	36.855	22.510	Russia	36.859	59.610
Hungary	33.854	20.800	South Korea	26.313	169.000
India	64.749	36.260	Taiwan	32.650	32.000
Indonesia	67.110	33.000	Thailand	76.534	46.150
Kuwait	0.51039	0.3045	Turkey	33.850	204.500
Nigeria	122.79	74.000	UAE	6.0776	3.8725

Interest Rates			
UK		Germany	
Base	7.25%	Discount	0.50%

France	1.25%	Discount	2.50%	Prime	5.00%	Residual	6.50%
Intervention	3.30%	Lombard	4.50%	Discount	5.00%	Belgium	
Italy		Canada		Fed Funds	5.56%	Discount	2.75%
Discount	5.50%	Prime	6.00%	Spain		Central	3.30%
Netherlands		Discount	4.50%	10-d Repo	4.75%	Switzerland	
SN&Avenue	3.30%	Denmark		Sweden		Discount	1.00%
		Discount	3.50%	Reco(Ave)	4.35%	Lombard	3.53%

Bond Yields

[illegible]

Money Market Rates

[illegible]

Liffe Financial Futures

Commodity	Month	open	high	low	volume	open
Germany	Mar-98	120.15	120.40	119.90	7831	7831
France	Mar-98	104.00	104.85	103.94	7519	7539.50
US Long bond	Mar-98	76.53	—	—	—	—
Japan Gov. Bond	Mar-98	126.87	127.27	126.35	22946	16570
3 Mth Sterling	Mar-98	129.81	129.80	129.80	180	—
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.29	92.44	92.38	9826	16127
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.29	92.39	92.32	10454	—
3 Mth Eurodollar	Mar-98	92.16	92.23	92.16	28236	270336
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.33	92.36	92.02	16655	335428
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.33	92.48	92.33	16655	—
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.28	92.34	92.27	7047	128494
3 Mth Eurodollar	Jun-98	92.23	92.32	92.27	1660	71894
3 Mth ECU	Jun-98	92.13	92.14	92.11	843	309056
3 Mth ECU	Jun-98	92.13	92.57	92.16	8755	—
3 Mth ECU	Mar-98	92.01	92.36	92.01	319	6784
FTSE 100	Dec-98	5038.50	—	—	—	15623

Liffe FTSE 100 Index Opt
Settlement Price: 5132.30

Series	Mar				Dec		Jan		Feb	
	Call	Imp Vol	Put	Imp Vol	Call	Put	Call	Put	Call	Put
5050	333	28	193	27	131	51	180	70	289	142
5100	303	28	218	26	10	101	144	86	255	163
5150	272	27	239	26	2	151	114	108	223	182
5200	242	27	280	26	14	201	84	132	190	206

Commodity Indices

	base date	Last	Chg	chg	31 Dec	chg YTD
Index	1970=100	175.52	-0.90	-0.51	215.26	-18.46
Agricultural	1970=100	228.84	-1.11	-0.48	291.23	-1.03
Energy	1963=100	62.83	-0.44	-0.70	86.86	-26.82
Ind Metals	1977=100	154.96	0.00	0.00	168.79	-8.19
Livestock	1970=100	176.04	-0.49	-0.28	197.03	-8.89
Prec Metals	1973=100	392.40	2.22	-0.56	463.54	-15.36

Energy

Brent Crude(\$/barrel)			Gas oil(\$/home)			WTI Crude(\$/barrel)			Products(\$/home)		
IPE	Clean	Chg	IPE	Clean	Vol	NYM	Last	Chg	Spot	CIF	NW Eur
Feb	1863	0.02	10685			Jan	1839	-	Gasoline	95	78.00
Mar	1678	0.00	4089	Jan	19125 -125	4781	Jan	1839	-		
Apr	1830	0.04	2075	Feb	19275 -150	3651	Feb	1758	-0.04	Naphtha	168.00
				Mar	19375 -150	2381	Mar	1721	-0.01	Gesoi	59.00
							Apr	7800	-0.01	Fuel Oil (35%)	78.00

Industrial Metals

LME (atoms)	Cash	3 month	6 month	Chtg	LME stings	Chtg
Aluminum HG	1520.5	1504.5	1510	1548	1547	226.675 -1675
Aluminum Alloy	1380	1385	2000	1388	1400	15 42940 500
Copper A	1712	1713	1610	1740	1741	14 332725 -900
Lead	548	547	1750	554	555	18 11675 -100
Nickel	5885	5890	10510	6075	6080	100 88252 -48
Tin	5426	6425	8500	5440	5445	85 12850 80
Zinc	1089.5	1000	1350	1211	1222	12 -4817.6 -1325

Precious Metals

pm fix/\$ per oz			pm fix/£ per oz			Coins (\$)				
	Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Year's chg		Day's chg	Year's chg		
Platinum	363.00	-0.50	-6.50	Platinum	219.20	2.20	0.75	Kruggerands	288.65	-80.65
Palladium	203.00	5.00	66.50	Palladium	122.60	4.40	53.75	Sovereigns	67.74	
Silver	6.20	0.04	1.32	Silver	3.74	0.01	0.85	Nickels	353.55	
	280.20	-2.95	-79.05					Maple Leaf	302.00	-79.40

Agricultural

[illegible]

100 Largest Insurance Funds

[illegible]

Midlands win
title again in
perfect style

Pint and a pizza keeps Marples on his toes

Chris Marples posed for photographs lying back in his seat, holding a pint in one hand and a bag in the other. "If it was good enough for Leeds in the Seventies it's good enough for me," he said. "They're drinking and smoking in every picture you see."

It was not a normal portrait of a footballer about to play the biggest game of his career, although no one could accuse the Emley goalkeeper of being conventional. He might have been preparing to face the West Indies as England's wicket-keeper; he has a two-foot steel rod in his leg; there is absolutely no chance of his meeting a curfew before the club's FA Cup third-round tie at West Ham on Saturday.

Throw in the fact that he has been Emley's saviour in two penalty shoot-outs, his nicknames (derived from his bright orange shirt and a, shall we say, full figure) are 'Tango man' or 'Tellytubby', and that the west Yorkshire club from the Unibond League have never been to the second round before never mind the third, and Marples is a bona fide leading actor in the commodity they call the romance of the Cup.

Marples, 33, joined Emley (population 1,800, average attendance 250) after a broken left leg ended a career that spanned more than 300 League games and spells at Chesterfield, Stockport County, York City and Chesterfield again. A phone call from Ronnie Glavin, Emley's manager, persuaded him to try non-League and this season, particularly in the Cup, he has been outstanding.

In the first round he made

three saves in the penalty shoot-out against Morecambe and two more against Third Division Lincoln City in the last round.

"I have a routine," Marples said. "I watch which corner the players look at first and study the way they run up to the ball. This year it's come off all right, other times I've looked a right fool. I had a terrible penalty record at Chesterfield."

Against Morecambe and Lincoln, Emley had to score goals in the last five minutes

FA CUP COUNTDOWN



BY GUY
HODGSON

to earn extra time and the shoot-out. Go in to the village and the message is consistent about Saturday's game. West Ham (members 8,000, plus, average attendance 23,000) will probably win but not as easily as they think. Three people were almost word for word the same: "This team never know when they're beaten."

Marples knows more than anyone. His broken leg came when he dived at the feet of a Scunthorpe player three years ago almost to the day. "The lad tried to jump me to be fair," he said, "but my leg

got caught in the turf and collided with his knee, breaking the tibia and fibula. It was very nasty. At the time there wasn't any pain, but 10 minutes later I felt it all right."

Three operations and 18 months trying to get fit proved futile in Football League terms and he will play at Upton Park with a quarter-inch rod running through a bone from the top of his knee to his ankle. Fine, unless he gets a serious injury which would entail smashing the fibula completely to remove a piece of metal that will bend but not break.

"I worried about it at first, but the surgeon says I'll be all right if it's kicked," he said. "I've been advised to have it removed, but at the moment I'm having no pain, so while it's like this I'll keep it in."

Marples, as he admits, did not always show such fortitude. Big things were expected of him when he succeeded Bob Taylor as Derbyshire's wicket-keeper at 19, playing as first choice for the county in 1985 and 1986. He was young, talented, but too keen to go to the bar.

"I was a young lad then and things were coming too a bit too quick. I'd just won the Fourth Division championship with Chesterfield at football and I had too much time on my hands and I like a pint, so... If it had happened a few years later I'd have handled it better."

"I blame myself. There was talk about me going a long way in cricket, but I didn't prepare myself properly for the game. It got to the stage where you have a drink after the game, you drink at the hotel, with the meal, afterwards in the bar."



Chris Marples: 'We're not a kicking side, we'll try to play West Ham at football and hope we don't get slaughtered'

Photograph: Ben Duffy

"I was my own worst enemy. Geoff Miller and Kim Barnett both had words with me but, being a young lad, you think you know better than anyone else. In some ways I wish I could turn the clock back, but I've had a good football career, enjoyed my life."

Marples probably could not change anyway. Even at the start of the current run, which began at Workington on 13 September and will stretch to nine matches at West Ham, he

was out with Barnsley's manager, Danny Wilson, on the eve of the game and he now considers it an essential good-luck omen that he does the same before every Cup tie.

"I'd had a few beers with Danny and on the way home I stopped and had a pizza - a margherita with garlic on it. I get stick off the players' wives saying 'you're humming, get away from me' but I've had it every round."

"Danny says I ought to stay

up here on Friday, go to the pub with him and he'll drive me down to the match on Saturday morning, but I don't think Ronnie would like that. So Friday night in London I've got to find a nice garlic pizza. And some beers."

At least he will have a presence in the penalty area on Saturday and he expects he is going to need it. "Realistically, we've got no chance. In the old days you used to get more shocks, but now I think the Pre-

miership is pulling away from the rest. Our attitude will be that we've got to enjoy the day. We're not a kicking side, we'll try to play them at football and hope we don't get slaughtered."

"When I came to here I never thought I'd play a Third Division side again never mind the Premier League. If we get beaten five, six or seven, I'll still enjoy it."

As Marples points out, the odds are not promising. Both a dislocated shoulder

and his broken leg came in the last two Januarys he played, but at least someone is optimistic. Under the Welfare Ground main stand some one had gone to the trouble to change the lettering on the official notice board. It read: "Emley FC welcomes the directors and officials of West Ham FC to the FA Cup replay, 14 January, 1998."

If it happens no one will enjoy the occasion more than Marples.

RUGBY UNION

Campbell to miss European decider

Stewart Campbell, the Scotland lock, will miss Caledonia Reds' European qualifying decider with Glasgow on Sunday after failing to recover from a calf injury sustained against South Africa earlier this month.

The Dundee High second row's place goes to Watsonians' Jason White, the 19-year-old who played in the early part of the Reds' European Cup campaign this season.

The coach, Ian Rankin, has made five changes overall, including two positional, from the last district championship match against Edinburgh in late October.

Stirling County's increasingly impressive James McLaren gets the chance to further his international claims at centre, with Shaun Longstaff moving to the wing and David Officer

dropping to the bench. John Manson also comes in at loose-head prop, with Willie Anderson switching to tight head at the expense of Sandy Penman, who moves to the bench.

Rankin has resisted the temptation to pitch the international hooker Kevin McKenzie back into the fray from the start, leaving him on the bench in favour of Gavin Scott.

Stirling team-mate Gareth Flockhart is fully fit, though, after missing his club's game at Edinburgh Academicals last weekend and takes his place alongside the Scotland captain Rob Wainwright in the back row.

Caledonia must beat Glasgow in Aberdeen to be sure of their place in next season's European Cup. Otherwise they will have to rely on the Scottish Borders failing to win with sufficient

tries in Edinburgh to pass their own total.

Edinburgh have sprung a surprise by including the New Zealander John Walters in their team to face Scottish Borders at Joverleith. The strong-running Walters has been in top form for Boroughmuir and confirmed his readiness for a district call-up with an impressive display against Watsonians last Saturday.

Bob Easson, the Edinburgh coach, said: "I believe that we should select a team on current form. John has been playing very well. He is a busy winger who works off people and he will be crucial in our aim to play 15-man rugby."

Walters, 25, was a regular in the Waikato side before coming to Edinburgh and played against Scotland on their 1996

tour of New Zealand. His introduction means the Scotland-contradicted player Ally McLean pays the price for his current loss of form.

Easson resisted the temptation to meddle further with his back line, opting to play the record cup holder, Scott Hastings, at centre rather than full-back where he has impressed for his club, Watsonians.

Among the forwards, the Boroughmuir hooker Kevan Allan comes in for the injured Grant McKelvey, while another New Zealander, Cameron Mather, is preferred to Graham Dall at open-side flanker.

"Kevan looks as if he has recovered from the injury that prevented him going to New Zealand with the Silver Thistles, while Cameron is full of running at the moment," Easson said.

When Worcester play Bristol in Sunday's Telford Cup it is likely to be the prelude to a couple of meetings in the Allied Dunbar Premiership next season - even though the clubs are two leagues apart at the moment.

Worcester are high-fliers in the National One (effectively Premiership Three), while Bristol look doomed to be relegated to Premiership Two.

Les Cusworth, the former England stand-off and national coach, believes his Worcester team are well prepared for the step up.

"There is half the season to go yet, but we are four points clear in second place. We made a big step when we won at Leeds last weekend," Cusworth said.

Worcester are accustomed to being promoted, too. "When we went up unbeaten last season

before I joined the club it was our fourth promotion in seven years," he added. "But we are not getting carried away. Only a few months ago we were playing low-grade rugby."

Worcester have the money, the resources and a huge catchment area west of Birmingham in previously untapped territory as far as first-class rugby goes. There has been speculation about which will be the next club to taste top-flight rugby for the first time.

In 1998, though, it will not be the Premiership Two teams, Rotherham, Exeter or one of Cusworth's old clubs, Wakefield. They finger below half-way.

So the tempting prospect remains that Worcester could jump into Premiership Two and, if still successful, be playing Premiership One in 1999.

Cusworth joined on 1 August, having made the decision when on tour with England in Argentina. "Jack Rowell has visited me and said that I've got the best job in rugby. We have a five-year plan, and Worcester now reminds me of Leicester 20 years ago," Cusworth said.

Two decades ago Leicester were poised to become England's top team in a spell when Cusworth masterminded a hat-trick of cup wins as an unorthodox free spirit in mid-field. Leicester also won the first league title in 1988 with Cusworth as leader.

The Yorkshireman has been given a free hand to galvanise Worcester by local businessman Cecil Duckworth, whose investment has already amounted to £1.3m, a sum matched by a Lottery grant to improve

facilities. "But this club is not about facilities, though we are proud of our development. It is about people," Cusworth said.

Bristol, meanwhile, have put six of their senior squad on the transfer list as part of their radical restructuring plans. The England Under-21 prop Andy Collins, South-west hooker Jim Dickinson, former Welsh youth full-back Steffan Jones, hooker Simon Gully, wing Nathan Millett and Combined Services back Chris Moore are all available.

Bristol have gleaned one victory from their eight league outings this season. Last Saturday they suffered their heaviest home defeat at the hands of league leaders Newcastle and today face a tough task against Harlequins at The Stoop.

- Terry Cooper

DARTS

Smith fights off Spiolek and lines up Taylor

Dennis Smith lined up a meeting with odds-on favourite Phil Taylor for a quarter-final place in the World Championship at Purfleet yesterday. The Swindon man rallied from a set down to beat Kevin Spiolek 3-1 and faces the top-seeded Taylor, winner for the last three years, in the Group

A decider tomorrow evening. Spiolek resisted briefly when he won the first two legs of the fourth set, but Smith moved up a gear to win the next three.

John Lowe, the former world champion, was the first big name to be eliminated when he was beaten 3-0 by the Canadian

Gary Mawson. Lowe was also beaten 3-0 by Peter Manley in his opening group match.

The American, Steve Brown, had the highest check-out so far, with 161 in his first set against Harry Robinson, but he only struggled home 3-2 after winning the first two sets.

ATHLETICS

Embarrassed Kipketer in UK visa fiasco

Wilson Boit Kipketer, the Kenyan world 3,000 metres stepchase champion has withdrawn from this Saturday's County Durham International Cross-Country after failing to renew his visa to enter the United Kingdom.

"It's embarrassing for everyone, the athlete, his management team and even ourselves," the race director, Nigel Gough, said. "Perhaps in the future we will insist on agents faxing a photocopy of their runners' passports showing their visas are up to date."

Gough denied Boit Kipketer had pulled out of the meeting as a result of former Olympic 10,000 metre gold medalist Khalid Skah being given a late entry into the race.

He rebuffed suggestions that Kenyans are reluctant to compete against the Moroccan. Skah controversially won his 1992 title after allegedly using a lapped colleague to pace him to victory against another Kenyan, Richard Chelimo.

SPORTING DIGEST

Basketball

NBA: New Jersey 96 Washington 91; Chicago 111 Dallas 102; Charlotte 120 Houston 101; Portland 90.

Darts

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (Purfleet, Essex) Group A: P Taylor (Eng) 10 K Spiolek (Eng) 3-0; D Smith (Eng) 10 K Spiolek (Eng) 3-1; Group B: P Taylor (Eng) 10 P Taylor (Eng) 3-0; Group C: P Taylor (Eng) 10 P Taylor (Eng) 3-0; Group D: P Taylor (Eng) 10 P Taylor (Eng) 3-0.

BRITISH OPEN CHAMPIONSHIPS (Easts Court, London): Men's pairs final (best of five legs): A Hayfield (Lundon) and J Walker (Northwich) 3-0; Women's pairs final (best of five legs): S Colquhoun (Middlesex) and P Henshaw (North) 3-0; S Edwards and M Solomon (London) 3-0.

Football

Marlon Allen, the former West Ham midfielder, is heading for a move into management after holding talks with League of Ireland side Cobh Ramblers. Allen, 32, now at Portsmouth, has been given permission to speak to the Cork-based club by his manager, Terry Fenwick.

Carl Asaba, the Reading striker, is to appeal against his sending-off at Queens Park Rangers in Sunday's 1-1 draw. The dismissal followed an incident with Rangers' Danny Madda, who was also sent off.

The French player Christian Karembeu has been transferred to Real Madrid from Sampdoria. The Spanish club will pay Sampdoria approximately £2.4m for the midfielder.

Paul Parker, the former England defender, yesterday signed for the Vauxhall Conference club Farnborough Town. Parker, who made 18 appearances for England and was part of the side which reached the semi-final of the 1990 World Cup, has been training with his new team in recent weeks.

MONDAY'S LATE RESULTS: FA Carling Premiership: Southampton 1 Chelsea 0; Nationwide Football League: Second Division: Gillingham 3 Brentford 1; Third Division: Colchester 3 Cambridge 2; 4th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1; 5th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1; 6th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1; 7th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1; 8th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1; 9th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1; 10th Division: Huddersfield 2 Gillingham 1.

Hockey

WOMEN'S UNDER-21 TERRITORIAL TOURNAMENT (Milton Keynes, final day): Essex 2 North 1; Midlands 2 West 0; East 1 South 0. Final standings: 1 Midlands; 2 East; 3 North; 4 West; 5 South.

Ice hockey

NHL: New Jersey 3 Buffalo 1; Pittsburgh 5 NY Islanders 1; Washington 4 St Louis 2; Detroit 2 Dallas 2; Tampa Bay 2 San Jose 1; Phoenix 3 Calgary 3; Colorado 1 Montreal 1; Los Angeles 5 Vancouver 2.

Motor racing

Hopes are fading of Belgium staging a Formula One Grand Prix next season after a court refused to rule on whether a law banning tobacco advertising was unconstitutional. The International Automobile Federation decided today whether to include the Belgian Grand Prix in their 1998 race calendar, but may yet postpone a decision as they are hoping for an amendment to the Belgian law, brought in last month, which bans tobacco advertising from 1999. Belgium could yet decide to comply with the European Union directive, which gives Formula One until 2006 to eliminate tobacco advertising.

Rugby Union

ALLIED DUNBAR PREMIERSHIP ONE: Bath 26 Northampton 5.

Skiing

Lack of snow has caused the women's slalom and giant slalom, originally scheduled for Oberschwang, Germany, next Monday and Tuesday, to be raced in Bormio, Italy, on the same days. There was no snow on the lower part of the Oberschwang course and weather prospects did not promise any improvement in the situation.

ALPINE WORLD CUP (Bormio, 10 men's slalom): 1 A Schiffrer (Aut) 2m 01.44sec; 2 W Franz (Aut) 2m 02.82; 3 L Kaser (Nor) 2m 03.01; 4 H Mader (Aut) 2m 03.28; 5 H Tinkl (Aut) 2m 03.57; 6 S Schenker (Sloven) 2m 04.01; 7 S Eberharter (Aut) 2m 04.28; 8 R Assinger (Aut) 2m 04.59; 9 S Schenker (Sloven) 2m 05.01; 10 W Franz (Aut) 2m 05.01; 11 D Cuche (Sui) 2m 05.09; 12 C Graber (Aut) 2m 05.18; 13 L Sailer (Can) 2m 05.22; 14 P Runggaber (Aut) 2m 05.22.

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Rankings for the first time. The 27-year-old from Aylesbury captured three titles on the recent North American leg of the WPSA World Tour and with a semi-final in October's World Open to her name as well, she overtakes her competitor Cassie Jackson, Australia's world champion Sarah Fitz-Gerald heads the list. She has been No 1 since November 1996 and has won 10 titles this year.

WPSA RANKINGS: 1 Fitz-Gerald (Aus); 2 M Martin (Aus); 3 S Wright (Eng); 4 C Jackson (Eng); 5 C Owens (Aus); 6 S Schenker (Ger); 7 S Henner (Eng); 8 L Irving (Aus); 9 L Cherman (Eng); 10 F Groves (Eng); 11 J J Martin (Eng); 12 R Moore (Eng).

Tennis

Mark Philippoussis has withdrawn from next week's Australian tennis hard-court tournament in Adelaide with a shoulder injury. The injury had been troubling Philippoussis for several weeks and organisers said it was decided he needed a rest before preparing for the Australian Open, which starts in Melbourne on 19 January. The injury has kept Philippoussis out of tennis for the last two months and the only event he will compete in before the Australian Open is the Kookyang Classic in Melbourne from 14 to 17 January.

TODAY'S NUMBER

787

The number of consecutive NBA games in which Michael Jordan has scored at least 10 points. On Monday night, Jordan equalled the record of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar when he scored 41 points in the Chicago Bulls' 111-105 victory over Dallas Mavericks.

SNOW REPORT

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Resort	Comment	Area	Lat	Long	Alt	Open	Close
ANDORRA							
Grand Rind	Best skiing on highest peaks	90%	27.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
AUSTRIA							
Schladau	Firm base, fresh top cover	80%	28.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
BULGARIA							
Velina	Firm packed snow base	95%	28.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
CANADA							
Jasper	Patched powder snow	85%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
FRANCE							
Les Arcs	Much improved conditions	85%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
ITALY							
La Thuile	La Thuile last snow open	90%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
NORWAY							
Hemmel	Firm packed snow	60%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
SPAIN							
Puerto de Navacerrada	Firm packed snow	80%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
SWEDEN							
Åre	Adequate cover on snow	85%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
SWITZERLAND							
Verbier	Firm packed in places	60%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12
UNITED STATES							
Marathon	Patched powder	95%	29.12	1.41	2,800	12/12	15/12

Snow Reports supplied by Newtel

TODAY'S PICK

Decisive Moments: Images From the News 1997 (7.30pm BBC2) It's been a bad year for photography. After a certain car crash in a Paris underpass, the profession was lucky to pull through as a befuddled public sought camera-wielding scapegoats. This is a detached look at the snaps which made this year's news - from the rescue of round-the-world

yachtsman Tony Bullimore, to the raid on the Frankfurt offices of her employer by Nicola Horlick, Diana, Princess of Wales walking down landmine alley and Swampy grinning from his tunnel. The film has a refreshing amorality which serves to reinstate the proper function of news photography as social record while gently highlighting public hypocrisy about newspaper

The World in 1998 (4.50pm BBC2)
An expansive Peter Snow waves his arms about and points us in the direction of next year's news. The first bits of the first ever international space station head upwards, El Niño will cause havoc in the southern hemisphere, the World Cup arrives on digital TV. Not forgetting the single currency and the Jubilee Line extension. And self-adhesive stamps.



Tragedy in Paris: 'Images from the Night 1997' BBC

THE FILM

The Apartment (Spmm C4) Jack Lemmon's reward for cross-dressing in *Some Like It Hot* was the plum part in Billy Wilder's tremendously sharp and witty social satire. He shines brightly in the role of a lonely, lowly insurance clerk who lends his apartment to his bosses as a love-nest, à la *Brief Encounter*, in order to rise through the ranks. Shirley MacLaine is the elevator girl he falls in love with before discovering that she is using his apartment too. The film won five Oscars – including Best Picture and Director – and was nominated for five more.

BBC1

7.00 News; Regional News; Weather (T) (2255/37).

7.30 Children's BBC; Poddington Peas (R) (2853/32), 7.45 Teletubbies (S) (28/2528) **7.40** The Busy World of Richard Scarry (R) (S) (28265/61), **8.05** Casper Classics (T) (6/497306) **8.30** The Real Adventures of Jonny Quest (R) (99976/21), **8.55** Newsround 97 (S) (T) (9776035), **9.30** Sweet Valley High (R) (S) (1125659), **9.50** Teletubbies (S) (9707/64).

10.20 News; Weather; Regional News (T) (28265/61).

10.30 The Nutcracker Prince (Paul Schill) (1990 US). Uninspired animated version of the Christmas classic telling the tale of a young girl's dreams of adventures in a magical land. The London Philharmonic live things up with a spot of Tchaikovsky. (S) (T) (135605/4).

11.40 Cartoon (4222/33), **12.00** Keeping Up Appearances (R) (S) (11509), **12.30** Celebrity Ready, Steady, Go! (S) (83/57), **1.00** News; Weather; Regional News (T) (28265/61), **1.35** Neighbours (S) (730836/3), **1.35** Camber (172/273).

1.45 Film **Bugsy Malone** (Alan Parker 1976 US). Scott Baio, Jodie Foster and a cast of kids have a riot in Alan Parker's gangster movie spoof musical (S) (T) (70606/3).

3.15 Film **Back to the Future, Part III** (Robert Zemeckis 1990 US). The concluding part of the entertaining time-travelling trilogy - not a patch on the original but far superior to its lamentable predecessor. Marty McFly (Michael J Fox) travels to the American Wild West of 1885 in a desperate bid to save Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd) from becoming the victim of one of the black-hatted villainous gunslingers Buford Tannen, a distant relative of the evil and rather stupid Biff. (S) (T) (958358/7).

5.05 Neighbours (S) (T) (67942/3).

5.30 News; Weather (T) (13826/7).

5.45 Regional News; Weather (T) (46267/7).

6.00 Film **K-9** (Rod Daniel 1989 US). Comic action-adventures starring James Belushi are generally best left alone and this is no exception. Here he plays an obnoxious copper who is teamed with an Alsatian police dog in an effort to crack a drug ring. With sadly unilarious results (S) (435632/38).

7.35 Film **David Copperfield**. David Attenborough continues his one-man celebration of 40 years of wildlife film-making by the BBC National History Unit. This documentary investigates the true nature of wolves (S) (T) (63/4783).

8.25 News; Regional News; Weather (T) (2101/4).

8.45 The National Lottery Draw (S) (T) (37570/2).

9.00 Cold Enough for Snow. Jack Rosenthal's follow up to *Eskimo Day* about the emotional crisis experienced by two families when their children leave for university (S) (T) (1870).

9.30 The Young Dave Allen Show. The comedian introduces a younger set (S) (21988).

1.00 The End of the Year Show with Angus Deayton (S) (6863/42).

2.05 Happy New Year (S) (6761212), **12.30** Hogmanay Live (S) (698755/3).

2.00 Film **Carry On at Your Convenience** (Gerald Thomas 1971 UK). Sid James and Hattie Jacques take up carry a leaden trade union effort from the 'Carry On' team (T) (16081).

7.30 - 7.00 **Johns BBC News** 24 (484537/1).

REPORTING: NI **5.45 - 6.00** **Newsline Scotland** **5.45** Reporting Scotland; **Weather** **6.00** **Wool: a Wildlife Special** **6.50** **One Pools and Horses** **7.55 - 8.25** **The Hospital Trust** **8.30** **Ward 815** **Ex-S** **8.45** **Elaine with Attitude** **10.15** **McCauley and McCauley** **10.45** **One Excuse?** **11.45** **Hogmanay Live** **1.05** **The End of the Year Show** with Angus Deayton.

BBC2

6.55 Going Hollywood (R) (S) (2186702). **8.10**
Great Mysteries and Myths of the Twentieth
Century (9536370).

8.35 Film **Vivacious (R)** (S) (116954).
George Stevens 1938
US. Ginger Rogers is the woman in question,
a wild New York nightclub singer who is wed
impulsively by James Stewart's young profes-
sor. An entertaining comedy which is pleasant
enough if you happen to be up at this ungodly
hour - worth watching for Stewart's conservative
father, an excellent Charles Coburn (9344122).

**10.05 The Great Romances of the Twentieth
Century (7464677).**

10.30 Film **The Stranger around the Corner** (Ernst
Lubitsch 1940) **US.** Director Ernst Lubitsch
guides this wonderful romantic comedy expertly,
allowing James Stewart and Margaret Sullivan
room to breathe as a blustering salesgirl and
male shop assistant who are unaware they are
lonely hearts pen pals. A minor classic with
Stewart's glorious seriousness a joy to
behold (87153031).

12.05 Close-Up on James Stewart (S) (8694702).

12.15 Film **Great Rally Report (S) (116954).**

12.45 Cambridge Folk Festival (S) (8223233).

**1.25 The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures
- the Magical Maze (S) (T) (2800306).**

2.25 The Travel Show (S) (9284257).

**3.30 Garth Brooks Live in Central Park (R) (S)
(2006431).**

4.20 Everything to Play For (S) (9230948).

4.50 The World in 1998. See *Today's Pick*, above
(S) (1804870).

5.50 Close-Up on James Stewart. Memories of
James Stewart, (S) (6062159).

6.00 Film **Beast of the River** (Anthony Mann
1952 US). In many critic's eyes, director Mann's
finest Western - a glorious Frontier adventure
about a reformed outlaw (James Stewart) who
is hired to accompany a wagon train on the
dangerous journey to Oregon in the 1840s.
When he encounters a former partner who is
still on the wrong side of the law (Arthur
Kennedy) he finds his loyalty tested (T) (95219).

**7.30 Decisive Moments: Images from the
News 1997.** See *Today's Pick*, above (S) (T)
(84656).

8.30 Filmstrip. Animation by director Daniel
Gale who wins the Oscar when Nick Park
has a year off. This cope-and-robbers comedy
looks 38-year-old Greaves four years and follows
the trials and tribulations of a misunderstood cat
called Geoff, a fish called Chips and their ac-
cident-prone owner, Matt Platt. (R) (S) (T) (2141).

9.00 Shooting Stars. Reeves and Mortimer re-host
last year's Christmas special with Ewen Bremner,
Jarvis Cocker (the "wee in wee") and Ian Kelsey,
while Vic has another chance to rub his thighs at
a pregnant Emma Forbes (R) (S) (378257).

9.35 The Fast Show. Nothing new, just last year's
of the comic series again (R) (S) (T) (124889).

10.20 Stella Street. The comedy series of celebrity soap
set in Surbiton (S) (T) (741677).

10.30 Film **Official Denial** (Brian Trenchard-Smith
1993 US). TVM sci-fi thriller about a man con-
vinced that he has been the victim of an extrater-
restrial kidnapping but is unable to convince the
authorities - or his wife - of his story (funny that)
But when a UFO crash-lands near his home, he
is called upon to try to communicate with the
alien occupant ... Hmmm (S) (3758696).

11.55 Bob's Fifth Annual Mootenanny.
Jools' singing, the Fun Lovin' Criminals and Gabrielle
Cropsey on Mr. Hollander (S) (T) (25625).

1.5 The Best of Glastonbury '97 (S) (2585994).

T 2.35am.

ITV

5.00 GMTV (T219344).
9.25 Children's ITV: The Fantastic Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor (S1162214). **9.55 London Today** (T) (2475788). **10.00 Freekazoid** (S) (71832).
10.30 Film Camp Nowhere (Jonathan Prince 1994 US) Came family comedy about a group of children who decide to set up their own summer camp (S) (T) (97987073).
12.00 Sky Show (5606746). **12.30 News: Weather** (T) (97987073). **12.45 News: Day** (T) (2817696). **1.30 Masters of Illusion** (T) (52437238). **1.55 ITN News Headlines** (T) (27430867).
2.00 Film Hoosiers (David Anspaugh 1986 US). A half-decent sports drama with Gene Hackman as a new basketball coach who arrives in a small Indiana town which cares a little too much about the fortunes of the local high-school team. An Oscar-nominated Dennis Hooper plays a local misfit and ex-player whom Hackman rehabilitates by hiring him as his assistant. (T) (8346325). **2.30 The World's Worst Stupid Squad** (T) (97987073).
3.40 News: Weather (T) (143899).
6.00 London Tonight (T) (870).
6.30 London Tonight Uncut (S) (122).
7.00 Emmerdale (S) (T) (1412).
7.30 Coronation Street. Deirdre makes an appalling discovery about Jon - which is sure to prompt one of her rather unsettling impressions of a dating tortoise (T) (246).
8.00 David Byrne and the New York Gang (T) (97987073). Byrne and the Woolpackers perform their line-dancing extravaganza "Cherokee Boogie" which he has been warned (S) (2615).
9.00 Film Danielle Steel's A Perfect Stranger (Michael Miller 1994 US) It's probably best to keep it that way (S) (55715815).
10.45 ITN News: Weather (T) (937948).
11.00 Happy New Year - Live from Edinburgh's Hogmanay. Anthea Turner and Phillip Schofield live from Edinburgh's Hogmanay (93509).
12.30 Film Mackenna's Gold (J Lee Thompson 1991 US). Surprise-free Western adventure in which Gregory Peck plays a sheriff entrusted with a treasure map by a dying Indian. Unlucky for him, the map is his uncle get wind of this, including Omar Sharif's kidnap-happy Mexican bandit. Support comes from Telly Savalas and Julie Newman (3377417).
2.55 Rockmanria (S) (6856130).
3.55 Film A Little of What You Fancy (Robert Webb 1988 UK). Documentary on the music hall, featuring popular songs performed by notables such as Stanley Holloway, Helen Shapiro, Lily Morris and John Rutland. (8318062).
5.05 The Borrowers in the Making (8054772).
5.30 Children's ITV: News (T) (8538285).
5.55 ITN Morning News (2504604).
To carry

If this page is
too
complicated,
try page 17.

CHANNEL 4

6.00 Sesame Street (S) (8540325). **7.05 The Baywatchers Club (R)** (8560526). **7.25 Two Stupid Girls (R)** (8250527). **8.00 The Big Breakfast (S)** (18515). **10.00 Zig and Zag (S)** **Big Morning: Happy Days (R)** (59342). **10.30 Zig and Zag (S)** **Big Morning: Saved by the Bell: Wedding in Las Vegas (R)** (S) (T) (13967). **11.00 Zig and Zag's Big Morning: Moesha (R)** (S) (3615). **11.30 Zig and Zag's Big Morning: The Monkees (8253035).** **12.05 Zig and Zag's Big Morning: Coping with... (S)** (2064783). **12.30 Zig and Zag's Big Morning: Erie, Indiana (R)** (T) (5777389).

1.00 Astronauts. An antidote to the recent Equinox programme on the disastrous Mir space station as cameras follow the crew of the Endeavour space shuttle (R) (52344).

2.00 A Woman of Substance. Third and final part (R) (T) (705832).

3.55 A Little Something. Short animation about women's erotiques (R) (S) (9237851)

4.00 Switched (835).

4.30 Countdown. A Whitley and Carol Vorderman present another 30 minutes of comfort television (S) (T) (219).

5.00 Film: The Apartment. See *Today's Film, above* (T) (78125493).

7.20 Creature Comforts. You've seen the gas advert and you must have seen the original at least once by now, but Nick Park's Oscar-winning animation, featuring animated clay figures living in a zoo, remains a work of genius and a comic treat (R) (T) (460959).

7.30 Things to Come. The 'Growing up With Science' strand offers this guide to the contrasting visions of the future. The Incorporated's David Aaronovitch brings together the technofuturists (a kind euphemism for anal-retentive anoraks) who believe that technology will overcome all problems; the continuity team who believe that politics, culture and human nature will shape our future (New hippies); and the catastrophists who reckon that the future will be filled with turmoil, global conflict and biological weaponry (everyone else). (T) (79764).

8.30 Brookside. 'Will Ron's date with Molly be a success?' A date with Ron Dixon is, by definition, not a success - unless he doesn't have to go to court (R) (T) (42926).

9.00 Max Headroom. A personal favourite of C4's first Chief Exec Jeremy Isaacs (so we're told), an irritating computer-creation strangely popular in the early 1980s. This sci-fi drama about a TV newshosting team in a dystopian future society dominated by electronic media features the chatter and sledge-hammer wit of Max Headroom, a computer-animation with a mind of his own, who provides commentary and advice to his alter-ego, Edison Carter, the team's star reporter. (7698932).

10.10 Adam and Joe's Fortuitous Years. Some of the most obscure moments from the first 15 years of Channel 4's influential series by pop-culture junkies Adam Buxton and Joe Cornish, 'your chance to revisit *The Hot Gossip Show*, *Moonchild* and *The Confessions of Felix Krull* if you feel the need' (T) (152832).

11.00 TFI 98. Chris Evans hosts a live edition of the talk show, with Des Lynam, Frank Skinner, Jo Guest and Melinde Messenger, and live performances from Mark Owen, Chumbawamba and Ocean Colour Scene. (S) (479054).

12.15 Under the Moon (14352081). **4.30 Lumberjacks! OK! (R)** (S) (95858). **5.00 - 6.00 Meerkat Live: Live in the Neighbourhood (S)** (58130).

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Dappledown Farm (R) (7652035)
6.30 The Wind in the Willows (6232518)
6.50 Men and Little Miss (S) (30143073)
7.00 Winslow's House (3933293); **7.30 Alvin and the Chipmunks** (8653590); **8.00 Hawkzoo** (R) (S) (7407257); **8.30 Adventures of the Bush Patrol (R)** (S) (8657798); **9.00 Stickin' Around (R)** (8657590); **9.30 Wishbone (R)** (S) (1127674)
10.00 End Blatyn – Secret of Killmoon A mad race to plot in the forest of Killmoon hatches an evil plot. . (S) (37550509). **12.00**
Animal Xtremes (90501515). **12.00**
The Best and the Beautiful (T) (4257734)
12.30 Family Affairs (S) (T) (1127580). **1.00**
5 News Update (S) (89489670); **1.15**
Rud: Surfing the Volcano (S) (73778793). **1.35**
Knight Rider (2602702).
2.30 Film Biggles (John Hough 1986 UK). A groovy eighties update for Captain We Johns's stuffy hero, played here with panache by Neil Dickson. It's essentially a lighthearted fantasy drama about a New York City fast-food entrepreneur (Alex Hyde-White) who is dragged back in time to World-War I at unexpected moments, at which point he gets into scrapes with "Time Twin", the flying ace Biggles, on the Western front (see 6804931).
4.30 Hercules: the Legendary Journeys.
Hercules battles the power-hungry Peneus (R) (2266707).
5.30 Hercules: the Legendary Journeys.
Iolaus's pride and arrogance cause him to be sentenced to death by the gods. Harsh but fair (R) (1293696).
6.00 100 Per Cent. Three contestants, playing in isolation, face 100 testing general-knowledge questions (S) (4380257).
6.30 Family Affairs. Roy is depressed. Maria celebrates the end of the worst 12 months of her life. There is still no sign of a reconciliation for Boris and Annie. And you thought you'd had a rough year... (S) (T) (4371590).
7.00 Sainsbury's Remembrance Witch. Feature-length episode – the one in which her parents take a year's sabbatical and our Sabrina moves with her aunt (35133702).
8.45 5 News. (8258696).
9.00 Film Murder by Death (Robert Moore 1976 US). Neil Simon's disappointing take on *Murder on the Orient Express* sends up some famous fictional detectives, including Charlie Chan, Miss Marple, Sam Spade and Hercule Poirot. Despite a heavyweight comic cast (Peter Sellers, David Niven, Maggie Smith, Alec Guinness) it's a bit of a mess as the five sleuths try to prove who is the greatest detective of them all (32165528).
10.50 The Night of the Millie. Operations' nipper is involved in a plot to sell important missile plans to a terrorist. Nickla must foil the plan but save the son. (S) (6044219).
11.45 The Jack Docherty Show (8938054).
12.30 Film The Myth of the Male Orpheus (John Hamilton 1993 Can). So-so Canadian comedy-drama about the conflicts that arise when a star professor volunteers as a subject in an experiment conducted by some "wimmin" (3495826).
2.10 Film Mourning Becomes Electra. (Dudley Nichols 1947 US). A screen version of Eugene O'Neill's cheerless adaptation of the Greek tragedy 'Orestia'. With Michael Redgrave and Rosalind Russell (2177339).
4.45 Night Stand (8959772).
5.30 The Last Days of Pompeii (170661). To Rome

RADIO

[illegible]

CHOICE

John Shuttleworth's Open House

A sad end to New Year's Eve, John throwing open his house to celebrity guests, none of whom turn up. Meanwhile, his wife, Mary, and their children are out elsewhere. Of course, if you're listening to this it may mean you have not been invited anywhere yourself, so it may not seem very funny.

[illegible]

SATELLITE/CABLE

CHOICE

The Rocky Horror Picture Show

What better way could there be to ring out the old and ring in the new? Richard O'Brien's wacky comedy-horror musical is the ultimate cult. Twenty-three years after this outrageous tale was made, people still turn up for screenings dressed as the transvestite characters.

[illegible][illegible]

VARIATIONS

[illegible]

Numbers in brackets are VideoPlus+® Code
(T) = Teletext Submitter (E) = Editor

TV Guide by Peter Conchie

Ferdinand commits himself to West Ham until 2005

Rio Ferdinand, the rising star of England's defence, has committed himself to West Ham until 2005, and says he "did not have to think twice" about doing so.

Ferdinand, 19, agreed to extend his existing four-year contract by a further three years as part of negotiations to increase his salary following his call-up to the England side against Cameroon last month.

Both player and club believe the new deal will finally put an end to speculation that Manchester United were aiming to sign one of the country's most exciting young prospects on a "pay now, play later" basis.

Across the city at White Hart Lane, two

of the older players were attempting to mooth over the problems caused, in part by Ferdinand's cousin, Les, criticising the club's new Swiss coach, Christian Gross.

Gary Mabbutt believes Gross's imperfect English, and resulting lack of communication, is the root cause of much of the current uncertainty. Mabbutt insists the Spurs players are confident that Gross, despite two significant distractions, will stay at the club and that he will lead them out of relegation trouble.

Tottenham are to appeal against the Department for Education and Employment's decision to deny a work permit to

Gross's chosen fitness trainer, Fritz Schmid, and Gross himself has dismissed suggestions he will leave to become the Swiss national coach as "speculation".

Mabbutt thinks a language problem has resulted in confused and contradictory messages coming out of the club. "Mr Gross's English is perfectly adequate, but at times, in a press conference situation, things can be misunderstood. I understand he was asked the same question in three different ways and maybe what he meant to say was not put as clearly as it could have been.

"Now the position has been clarified, although it has caused a couple of days of

uncertainty, and the players are all convinced that Mr Gross will be staying at the club to see out the end of his contract. We are all working as hard as we can to turn around the situation we are in."

Ferdinand and Darren Anderton, who are both out injured again, expressed concern over Gross's methods, claiming in newspaper interviews that their injuries had been exacerbated by training. However, Colin Calderwood, Tottenham's Scotland defender, told BBC Radio 5 Live: "Les and Darren, especially with the amount of time they have been out, have come back and now seem to be out again for hopefully not

more than two or three weeks. That makes them unhappy and that's obviously where the stories have come from."

Gary Speed's position at Goodison Park continues to be in question, with Sheffield Wednesday offering £5m plus a player, believed to be Jim Magilton, for the Everton captain. The offer improves on one of £4.5m from Newcastle. Good news for Everton is that the French striker Mickael Mader has completed his free transfer from the Spanish club Deportivo La Coruña.

Manchester City have denied that Newcastle United have made a £12m offer - made up of £5m and three players - for

Georgi Kinkladze. A spokesman said there is "no substance" to the reports.

Ally McCoist may be joining Sunderland from Rangers on loan. The 35-year-old forward is wanted back by the English First Division club where he spent two years before joining Rangers in 1983. He is considering a three-month loan, which could help him secure a place in Scotland's squad for the World Cup finals in France.

Sheffield Wednesday are to have fresh talks with Hajduk Split over the Macedonian international Goe Sedloski, who failed a medical before Christmas.

- Alan Nixon

Palmer picks up the pieces down at Dell

Carlton Palmer's star is an the ascendant again, as his resolute performance for Southampton against Chelsea demonstrated.

Phil Coles finds the Saints midfielder in the midst of a resurrection at The Dell.

Carlton Palmer and his Southampton team-mates had been billed as the support act on Monday night when Chelsea were meant to put their championship claims on centre stage. Instead, as the much-criticised former England midfielder ran his legs off, and Chelsea found themselves going nowhere far too often.

Badly missing the suspended Dennis Wise, even the front-line pairing of Mark Hughes and Gianfranco Zola failed to spark Ruud Gullit's side into a positive response to Kevin Davies' early strike.

Gullit, his famed sang-froid for once missing, said his players had been "suicidal" and "stupid", adding that, like a dog, they had to go home and lick their wounds.

Even with five months of the Premiership campaign to go,

those title wounds might now be telling, with Chelsea having dropped seven points - the margin by which they trail Manchester United - in their last four matches.

Palmer added his view as he suggested Gullit's team had not shown the real drive that makes champions. "Chelsea are a super team and if you don't deny them space they'll pass the ball around and murder you," he said. "I wouldn't say we had more commitment, because they worked hard all game and did knock it around."

"So I'm not saying they didn't fight. That would be a lie. They passed it well and perhaps didn't have the luck. But I think we wanted the points more than they did on Monday. That's what it boils down to. That made the difference."

That is a fatal flaw in any side wanting to wrest the title away from Old Trafford, with Southampton now having joined Coventry and Bolton in beating Chelsea. Palmer, however, believes the sheer hard work he and his team-mates put in is something others can repeat, and not only at the expense of Chelsea.

"It's not just Chelsea that you have to do it to," he said. "You've got to do exactly the same against United, Liver-

pool and Arsenal. You have to close them down, especially somebody like Zola. But you have to do that with Steve McManaman, David Beckham and Paul Scholes as well.

"When you're up against players like that you can't let them run. You have to earmark them for special treatment. Zola's one of them."

Palmer's commitment in midfield against Chelsea was exemplary, and the Southampton manager, David Jones, said the player's troubles at Leeds have allowed him to buy a cut-price saviour.

"Carlton's been brilliant since he came to the club," Jones said. "The lad is a winner; he leads by example, and you can't say any more of him. I know that I only got him at the price I did (£1m) because of the problems at Leeds. Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to afford to pick him up. I'm just grateful Ron Atkinson didn't get the Wednesday job six weeks earlier!"

Palmer himself is also grateful, to Jones for resurrecting a career that was fading under George Graham at Elland Road. "It's a great set-up here," he said. "Everybody knows we're not going to win the League. But we're capable of being better than the bottom three."

FA Cup countdown, page 29



Bath's marauding flanker, Russell Earnshaw, struggles to break free of the Northampton defence at the Rec yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

RUGBY UNION

Bath decide to get serious at Saints' expense

Steve Evans
Bath 26
Northampton 3

The panto season is with us and for all but the last frantic 10 minutes its spirits seemed to permeate play at the Recreation Ground yesterday. Until this last period, slapstick had been the favoured mode, not least when Bath decided to punt the ball backwards from one wing to the other, with the recipient, Adeyado Adebayo, so baffled by the move he could do little but walk the ball into touch.

It was typical of the game until the home side finally decided on a more serious approach and scored a couple of tries. First, the flanker Russell Earnshaw went over after the rangy American No 8 had outpaced the Saints defence. The second try came when the Bath captain, Andy Nicol, crossed. Both tries were converted by Jon Callard to add to his four penalties.

Before the game, the Bath coach, Andy Robinson, had said it was a match that had to be won, and won in style. In the end, he had his way but for much of the game the style simply was not there.

For more than an hour, Northampton had matched Bath in spirit and skill, only conceding the lead through Callard's penalties. Their own not-so-secret weapon, Paul Grayson, had kicked only one penalty because Bath wisely decided to deny him the opportunities.

If there was a turning point, it was in the middle of the second half when Northampton, rampaging forward, won a penalty five metres in front of the posts and opted to run instead of kick. They then discovered exactly how unbreakable the Bath defence was and from then on they must have realised that victory was beyond them.

Bath looked underwhelming but still retained enough of their old method and class to withstand the buffeting. Mike Catt, in the centre, was impressive in defence and attack, sending down long, ground-devouring kicks to set Northampton back when they were in good attacking positions.

Despite the defeat, Northampton still looked a side transformed from the one that started the season. The beef was there yesterday, not least in the shape of the big Springbok prop Garry Pagel.

But there was also a steel present that was missing earlier. It is a long time since Northampton looked as fierce in the front five as Bath but so it was yesterday: the Saints continually battered away in what used to be called "true Bath style". The second rows Jon Phillips and Jason Chandler loomed large.

The difficulty for the Saints coach, Ian McGeechan, is that all this effort and all this money on imports such as Jon Sleightholme from Bath still was not enough to do the trick. Gregor Townsend, in the centre, had a good day, conjuring the occasional moment of unpre-

dictable magic from nothing. However, in the face of a defence such as Bath's his efforts were doomed to fail.

The difficulty for Northampton - and the joy for Bath - is that in professional rugby success breeds money, and money breeds more success. Bath may look unlikely to win the league but the European Cup awaits them. For Northampton, the question is how can a small town produce big-money rugby?

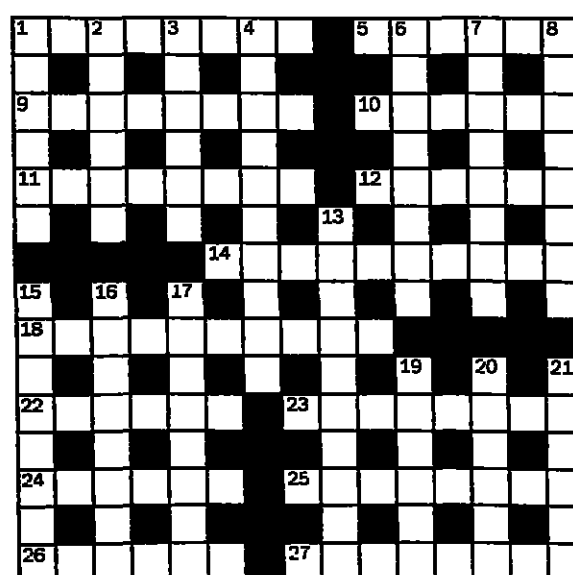
Bath: Tries Earnshaw, Nicol, Conversions Callard 2, Penalties Callard 4, Northampton: Penalties Grayson.
Bath: J Callard; J Evans, P de Gierville, M Catt, A Adebayo; R Bullard (M Perry 70), A Nicol (capt); K Yates (J Mabbutt, 45), M Pegg, V Joseph, G Lister, M Redman, R Earnshaw, R Webster (E Pears, 72), D Lyle.
Northampton: J Bell; J Sleightholme, G Townsend, A Northery, H Thompson; G Grayson (J Hurst, 80), J Earnshaw; G Pagel, A Clarke, M Stewart, J Phillips, J Chandler, D Macdonald (M Volland, 75), D Pountney, T Rodber (capt).
Referee: R Hughes (Manchester).

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3495, Wednesday 31 December 1997

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS
1 Hoop-la, legitimate thing to exploit (4,4)
5 Lump of bread we butter as starter for a fairy (6)
9 Lugos won, unusually, by defensive errors (3-5)
10 Hide patterns of military display (6)
11 Driving excellent cars... (4-4)
12 ...bought this Roman, heavy type (6)
14 Sliced loaf ordered for the mining areas (10)
18 Transparent way to help out in time of trouble, say? (3-7)
22 Composer from Barnoldswick (6)
23 Brick used by law-breaker in the beginning (8)
24 Soldier and caller, mainly, in couples dancing (6)
25 Standard infusion of leaves, mostly for the irregular? (8)
26 Giants - exactly what is needed in bronzes (6)
27 Cautious about boy, daily (8)
DOWN
1 Stir fry, hot and bubbly (6)
2 Cut what is carried up by climber on Gibraltar (6)
3 This artist got it right with a circle (6)
4 Impertinent character of Sheridan's so upset (10)
6 The creation, we hear, of a powerful Speaker close to number ten (8)
7 Keep back, using shoulder (8)
8 Cabinet of many titles (8)
13 Challenger's escape route? (6-4)
15 No fast food? (8)
16 Good honest beginners in mixed tennis, once a week (8)
17 Hills in hundreds? (8)
19 Pair harnessing slow, mediocre horse (6)
20 An exercise in North America for sickness (6)
21 Mean to provoke youth-leader (6)

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THE INDEPENDENT
SPORTS CALENDAR ON 2 JANUARY

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